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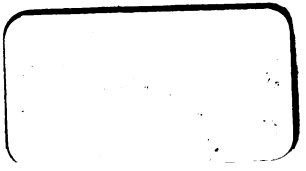
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MONKS OF LERINS
AND
OTHER TALES


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THE MONKS OF LERINS,

ETC.

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THE

MONKS OF LERINS,

AND

Other Tales of Old Time.



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CONTENTS.

The Monks of Lerins.
Eusebia of Marseilles.
The Legend of Placidus.
The Sanctuary of Our Lady of the Thorns.
Catherine of Rome.
The Miracle of Typasus.
The Demon Preacher.
The Legend of the Hermit Nicholas.
The Martyr of Rœux.
The Legend of St. Cædmon.
The Scholar of the Rosary.
The Legend of St. Hubert.

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THE MONKS OF LERINS,

ETC.



THE bell of the monastery of Lerins* had rung for Matins; and at the holy summons more than 500 monks had met in the church to sing the praises of Him to whom they had vowed their lives, and of His blessed Mother, whose Assumption they were about to celebrate.

Scarcely had the bell given its second signal before the fathers had gained the choir. One alone lingered: it was the abbot, who, standing at the window of his cell, looked out into the pale moonlight, and fixed his eyes intently on the mainland opposite the coast of France, as if he sought to discern some object in the distance. Sometimes, too, he seemed straining his ear as if to catch a remote sound; but all was still, except the gentle murmur of the waves as they rippled to the shore of his own island, or broke against its cliffs. At last, rousing himself from his reverie, he prostrated himself on the ground, and with clasped hands, and eyes raised to heaven, exclaimed thrice, "Thy holy will be done, O my God!"

As soon as he had pronounced these words, the countenance of the abbot resumed its wonted serenity; and, at the third and last summons of the bell, he rose, and

* Situated on a small island off the southern coast of France.

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went to the choir, where his brethren were awaiting him in some anxiety; for their abbot was ever wont to be first, not last, at the midnight office.

As soon as he had taken his place, the cantors intoned the invitatory: "Oh, come, let us adore the King of kings, whose Virgin Mother was this day taken up into heaven!" and all the religious repeated in chorus, "Oh, come, let us adore the King of kings, whose Virgin Mother was this day taken up into heaven!" "Oh, come," resumed the cantors, "let us rejoice before the Lord; let us praise God our Saviour; let us come into His presence with songs of gladness, and sing hymns to His glory!" And again the choir repeated, "Oh, come, let us adore the King of kings, whose Virgin Mother was this day taken up into heaven!"

When matins were ended, the abbot robed himself in the sacerdotal vestments, and began to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which the choir accompanied with sacred chants, now of penitence, and now of joy.

One by one, their arms crossed on their breasts, the religious advanced towards the altar, to place themselves in fitting order to receive the Holy Communion. Then the abbot, holding aloft the vessel containing the Sacred Hosts, thus addressed his children: "My well-beloved brethren in Christ Jesus, this God who has already given His blood for you on Calvary, is now going to give you Himself. After such generosity, can you refuse Him any thing? Nay, even if he should demand from each one of you the last drop of your blood, which of you would dare withhold the gift? Which of you would not burn to exchange this perishable life against the crown of immortality? In this holy solitude, you have learnt to renounce not only things external to yourselves, but even those very selves; day by day you have been learning by practice how to sacrifice yourselves to Him who has just sacrificed Himself for you. Well, my dear children, now is the moment come when it will be required from at least the larger

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number among you to consummate this sacrifice; and the holy bread you are about to receive will serve as your viaticum. Be of good cheer, my children; the sun which is now about to rise shall never set for you; but its light will be succeeded by the eternal brightness of the Sun of Righteousness. Your palms are ready, your crowns are even now woven. Before the bell rung for matins this night, I was transported in spirit into this very church. You were all here with me, my children; and the guardian angel of these isles, robed in a vestment of crimson, but his brow radiant with joy, was here among us; and I saw him give first to me and then to another a branch of palm, at the same time crowning your brows with a resplendent garland. Some few only were left out, reserved, no doubt, by the providence of God, for further conflicts. You already know, my brethren, that the Saracens have invaded Provence; their next prey will be this island of ours; be strong then, and remember that they can only reach your bodies, that your souls are treasured up for eternity. But let none among you be self-confident, and then none will be apostates. To suffer for a moment, and to enjoy for ever, such is your blessed destiny. The God whom you see here hidden for love of you, will soon manifest Himself to you in all the brightness of His glory. Come, then, unite yourselves to Him; and love shall lighten all the anguish that you may be called upon to bear."

This address, so far from saddening the hearts of the brethren, only made their festival more joyous; and blissful tears stole down their pale cheeks. Two and two they came forward to receive Holy Communion from the hands of their abbot, from the eldest to the youngest; and the Holy Sacrifice was scarcely completed when the sun appeared above the horizon; then they sang Lauds with more fervour than ever before; and then, at the command of their abbot, they set themselves to meditate on the Passion of Christ, and so to nerve their souls with courage to meet the coming trial.

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At the same time the abbot offered to conduct to a place of safety any one among them who feared death, and called to him the youngest of the monks, to the number of thirty-six, together with some children whom they had in the monastery as pensioners, and placing them on board two barks, he sent them towards the coast of Italy, after tenderly embracing them, and giving them his last benediction. They all wept bitterly, and implored permission to stay and die with the rest; but religious obedience constrained them, and they departed, long looking back with regretful eyes to their beloved abode, where they would so gladly have remained to earn the martyr's crown.

Meanwhile, the monks who were left behind busied themselves in securing, as far as they could, against pillage and destruction the objects they considered most valuable. They dug pits in the remotest corners of the island to hide the sacred vessels, the relics of the saints, the sacerdotal vestments, and all that could be profaned by the barbarians. After this, they betook themselves to their ordinary occupations on festival days; some gave themselves to their books, others guided their flocks to the pasture-grounds, and others, again, in the scriptorium, went on with the works they had begun copying. No one seeing them thus employed, in such perfect peace and serenity, could have supposed that they were in the immediate expectation of death.

Soon, however, a number of barks were discerned in the distance, making rapid way towards the island; and, as they came nearer, there resounded from them loud cries of "Death to the Christians!" while at the same time a forest of Damascus blades glittered in the sun. At last they drew to land, and a throng of Saracens, armed to the teeth, leapt on shore, and pressed on towards the monastery.

The religious, as we have said, in obedience to their abbot's commands, were silently engaged in their respective occupations, and the approach of the Saracens only shed a gleam of joy over their countenances; two

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of them, and no more, named Eleutherius and Colombo, overcome with fear, fled away and hid themselves in a grotto situated in the midst of a wood which skirted the eastern shore of the island.

The Saracens had no sooner landed than they thronged into the narrow path which led to the monastery, at the gate of which knelt the abbot, in tranquil expectation, holding the cross in his hands, and praying to the Lord to give both to him and his numerous children strength to confess His holy name in the presence of His enemies, and to suffer the extremity of pain rather than renounce the faith.

At the sight of the humble attitude and undisturbed serenity of the holy man, the Moors drew back astonished; but fury in a few moments took the place of amazement; they seized him and dragged him forcibly into the midst of the cloister, to make him the chief victim of their rage against the religion of Christ. Very soon they had spread themselves through church and corridors, halls and gardens, and the monks were dragged to the side of their abbot, and there guarded with drawn sabres, while the work of devastation was accomplished.

Then indeed did this abode of silence resound with the clang of arms, with cries of fury, and with the confused noise of destruction; for every thing that could not conveniently be carried off was broken,—seats, tables, books, crosses, earthen vessels, were thrown in heaps out of the windows; and the rage of the invaders was inflamed by finding no rich booty,—nothing in any part of the monastery but poverty and simplicity.

At last the chief of the Saracens, snatching the cross from the hands of the abbot, held it up to him, and commanded him to spit on it, and acknowledge Mahomet on pain of instant death.

"Nay, rather," answered the abbot meekly, "give me that holy symbol, that I may cover it with kisses, too happy to die for Him who died for me."

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At that same moment the raised scymitar fell, and severed his head from his body, which was the signal for a frightful carnage; and all would have perished in an instant if the chief had not interposed, commanded his soldiers to separate the young from the old, that if they could find no booty, they might at least carry off a good number of slaves. Immediately about a hundred of the younger monks were put aside, and all the others massacred before their eyes, in the hope that they might thus be induced by terror to abjure the more readily the Christian religion. Then the chief thus addressed them:

"See, now you are free from those old watch-dogs who guarded you; they had done with life, which has no attractions at their age, and therefore they despised it; but your brows are yet unwrinkled, now is your time for enjoyment, and I offer you the means of attaining it. Renounce the religion of Christ, and embrace that of Mahomet. See Moussa, my lieutenant, was once a Christian like you, and I swear to you by the Crescent that I will treat you as I have treated him; and now I give you your choice between the turban and death."

"Death, death!" they all cried with one voice, and immediately began a song of thanksgiving. The chief commanded their immediate slaughter, and so they all ascended together to claim their crown, four only being reserved, whom the chief kept back for slavery. These were of lofty stature, and so beautiful that they might have been taken for angels rather than men.

Meanwhile, Eleutherius and Colombo remained hidden in their grotto, fancying every moment they heard the Saracens approaching, when suddenly a brilliant light shone before them, and a delicious melody rung in their ears, tokens, as they could not doubt, of their brethren having won at that moment the martyr's crown; for, lifting their eyes, they saw, though the sun was now high in heaven, a number of brilliant stars

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disappearing one by one in the depths of the sky. Then Colombo said to Eleutherius,

"Cowardly soldiers of Christ are we, who have fled before the enemy; and, therefore, now that our brethren have reached the port, we are still here below tossing about in the storm, and in danger of shipwreck. The thought of the eternal prize nerves my heart against the terrors of death; I will seek the Saracen; slavery or martyrdom, whichever be my lot, can nothing avail to shake my faith: I will go and try to bury my brethren; in order to pay them this last duty, I ought to risk my life."

"My brother," answered Eleutherius, "while the Saracens are in the island it will be useless to think of burying our brethren: to attempt it will be to incur certain death. But, however, if you believe that your inspiration is of heaven, follow it, and the Lord will be your helper, covering you with brazen armour, so that you will be invincible; but for myself, I am yet too weak thus to present myself to death with deliberate purpose. The holy will of God be done."

Accordingly, after giving the farewell kiss, Colombo left the grotto, and made his way through the thickets to a narrow path which led to a gate of the convent-garden. He expected to find the Saracens there, and therefore armed himself by prayer before entering; but he met no one, though threatening cries warned him that he had been seen from the windows of the monastery; and he reached the cloister without interruption. There a fearful sight met his eye,—heaps of dead bodies, rivulets of blood, heads separated from their trunks, limbs scattered about here and there, and in the midst, fixed on a pike, the head of the venerable abbot. At this sight he threw himself on his face sobbing; but one blow from the scymitar of a Saracen sent him to join his brethren in heaven.

How long and sad for Eleutherius was the night which followed this day of slaughter! All was profoundly still; and knowing by the silence that the

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Saracens must have departed, he left his grotto in the middle of the night, and made his way to the monastery. There, thrilled with terror and grief, he stumbled every moment over the bodies of his brethren; and being unable to procure any thing to make a light, was constrained to endure the additional horror of darkness for several hours, which he spent in prayer, kneeling on the sod made holy by the blood of so many martyrs. At first, his soul was wrapt in sadness at the thought that he alone was left behind, while his brethren were in glory; but afterwards, he felt a blessed consolation in knowing that they were all interceding in his behalf.

"O my brethren!" he said to them, "I fled, it is true, before the face of the enemy; but I have not denied my faith, therefore you still love me—I dare to hope it, and you will not forget in heaven him who is still left on the battle-field exposed to the darts of his foe. The remembrance of your triumph will sustain my faith, strengthen my hope, and increase the fervour of my charity."

Thus he passed the night in tears and prayer; and at last a ray of joy seemed to pierce the depths of his soul, and he burst forth involuntarily into songs of praise.

His next thought was of his own present duty; and, after some reflection, he resolved to go into Italy and seek the young religious whom the holy abbot had sent thither, in order to bring them back and re-establish the monastery; for he hoped that the Saracens would speedily abandon the coasts of Provence. He was absorbed in these thoughts, when he heard the distant step of a man slowly advancing by the cloister wall. His first impulse was to fly; but he remembered the holy ground on which he stood, and determined not to be again guilty of cowardice. "Let him come," he said to himself, "Mussulman though he be; the blood which surrounds me shall support my courage;" and he threw himself once more on his knees to seek

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for strength in prayer. Meanwhile, the step grew more and more distinct, though in the twilight he could not distinguish who it was that was approaching him; but in a few moments a Moor stood beside him, and spoke.

"Fear nothing, my brother," he said, "I am no longer thine enemy. I was once a Christian; I became a renegade, but now I would return to the faith of my fathers. Now rise, and hear my story. I was born at Tauroento, a hundred miles from hence, on the shores of the Mediterranean; and I was hardly thirteen when the town was taken and sacked by the Moors. My father, a fervent Christian and a valiant soldier, put himself at the head of the population, and held out during a siege of several months; but at last he fell under the steel of the Mussulman; and his wife Cecilia, my mother, I saw massacred before my eyes while kneeling in prayer; and I myself, seized by her murderers, was thrown, with a great number of companions in misfortune, into a vessel bound for Africa; there, exposed in the market like a beast of burden, I was sold to a zealous Mahometan. For two years, he treated me, if not with kindness, at least without severity; and though several times he proposed to me to change my religion, yet on my refusing he left me in peace. But when I reached the age of sixteen, he attacked me more vigorously; and by dint sometimes of seducing promises, sometimes of harsh treatment, he succeeded in overcoming my resistance."

At this avowal his speech was interrupted by sobs, and the wasted cheeks of the monk were also bathed in tears.

"Alas!" he continued, "why did I not practise the constancy of these noble martyrs, and sacrifice my life rather than my faith! At the moment of accepting the turban I ceased to be a slave, and from that time began to live what is called a life of pleasure, but with a bitter sorrow in the depths of my heart. Some time

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after this, Abdal Malek set forth from Africa with an army to fight against Charles Martel, who had defeated the Mussulmans at Poitiers, and I accompanied him. From this time I have added crime to crime; under the name of Moussa, I have led the Saracens on to fire, to murder, and to pillage, respecting neither age nor sex,—pillaging churches, devastating monasteries, so that my crimes rather than my valour have raised me to the rank of lieutenant to the chief, Boalkier. O, holy monk," he continued, throwing himself at the feet of Eleutherius, "pray for me! I dare not myself address my prayers to heaven; it would be deaf to my voice. How can I hope pardon from a God whom I have so outraged!"

"O my brother," replied Eleutherius, "the mercy of God is greater than even your crimes. The Divine ray which has just pierced the darkness of your heart, has no doubt been obtained for you by the prayers of those whose blood you have shed, and who, imitating their Divine Saviour, have prayed for their murderers. Therefore, let hope spring up in your soul, together with repentance, and penance shall restore peace and felicity to your heart."

By this time the day had dawned, and they both occupied themselves in burying the bodies of the holy martyrs. In a few days, Eleutherius set off for Italy, to bring back the brethren whom the abbot had sent there; but the bark which bore them had been captured in the Gulf of Genoa by African pirates, who had carried them into Spain, where they had been sold as slaves.

Moussa, the converted renegade, was thus left sole guardian of Lerins. He laid aside his Mahometan costume, which he burnt in the midst of the garden, and put on a monk's dress, which he had found in one of the cells. From that time he devoted himself to works of penance, intending to await the re-establishment of the monastery, and to pass therein the rest of

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his days with the monks whom Eleutherius had gone to seek, and whom he hoped one day to see return to the convent.

The Saracens, meanwile, after their day of slaughter at Lerins, pursued the work of devastation far and near, sacking and burning towns, villages, and churches. One day, after the destruction of a church in which the whole population of a village had taken refuge, and were buried under its ruins, the chief, Boalkier, remarked, for the first time, the absence of his lieutenant, Moussa, whom he had not seen since the day at Lerins, and inquired for him of his attendants; but none could give any account of him, for he had not communicated his design to any; so that the chief, becoming impatient, commissioned two of his soldiers to go and make inquiries concerning him. For this service he selected two renegades, who, knowing the country, were best able to help him in his search. They were both robbers by profession, one of whom had escaped from the public prisons, and the other was pursued by justice in consequence of a murder which he had committed; and both had joined the Saracens in order to shield themselves from the vengeance of the law; the declaration of apostasy being to them a mere formula, which they pronounced without any thought or conviction one way or the other. After taking counsel together, they agreed to explore first the Isle of Lerins, as it was there that they had last seen Moussa. Accordingly, they took a boat, and rowed towards the monastery.

As they approached the island, serious reflections began, in spite of themselves, to arise in their minds, when they contrasted the savage fury of the Saracens, which they had witnessed, with the meek endurance of the holy monks; and when they landed on the island, even yet reeking with the blood of the martyrs, an emotion to which they had long been strangers stirred the very depths of their hearts, so long hardened by crime. After they had landed, they fastened their boat to a tree in silence, and ascended the narrow path lead-

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ing to the cloister. The bodies of the martyrs were no longer to be seen; but in a recess in the sanctuary was a monk praying.

"Here is a man," said one, "who has had a narrow escape; what are we to do with him?" The other made no answer. When they came up to the monk, they saw that his eyes were bathed with tears.

"Well, brother," said they, "you seem to have had a visit from the Saracens; and you must think yourself lucky to be still standing on your feet, and with your head on your shoulders. It is one of these same Saracens that we are seeking: Moussa is his name. Have you met with him?"

"Moussa!" answered the seeming monk: "I am he; or rather I am he who once bore that name. Do you not recognise me? Who you are, I know well; and I know also that I am more guilty than you, because I led you on to crime by word and by example; but since the goodness of God gives me the opportunity of retrieving my sin so far as it is retrievable, I implore you also to leave the ways of wickedness; for there is yet time for you as well as for me. His mercy is infinite, as I am experiencing; but His wrath will indeed be dreadful if you continue in sin."

The two renegades looked one upon another almost stupified with astonishment. They felt as though they were dreaming, and dared not break the silence.

"What are we to do?" at last asked one of them.

"What?" answered Moussa; "do as I do myself, weep and pray, and bow before the just judgment of God. Unworthy as I am, I have taken on myself this holy habit: if you too would wear it, we may be companions in penance, as we have hitherto been in sin."

"But have we not to fear the anger of our chief? He may return to this place."

"Let him return," answered Moussa; "too happy should I be if I might mingle my blood with that which I myself shed on this holy sod."

After a moment's hesitation the two apostates de-

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termined to remain in the island with Moussa; and thus did the blood of the martyrs prove, as it ever has done, the "seed of the Church."

XX.

EUSEBIA OF MARSEILLES.

Not far from the town of Marseilles lies a smiling valley, fertile and green, which is abundantly watered by the river Huiréune: it is a spot which a painter would choose as his study, a poet as his theme,—a spot which seemed consecrated to quiet and peace, separated by its thick surrounding woods from all the cares and turmoils of the outer world.

In this lovely vale, a fitting habitation for those whose vow bound them to a life of holy retirement, stood a venerable convent, which had been established there by the Deacon John Cassian. To this abode of peace flocked innocent maidens and pious widows from far and near; some who were wearied of the vanity and trouble of the world, and anxious to find a refuge from it; some—and of these perhaps were the greatest number—who still in the earliest and brightest years of life, had heard the voice of their Redeemer, and left all to follow Him.

Who can describe the happiness of their convent life! of the peaceful days, every moment of which was provided for by the rules, and which flew by so quickly! Who can describe the peace of soul which reigned through all the Sisterhood, in which love of God and charity for each other had created one heart, and obedience to their rule and their superior only one will!

The superior of this convent at the time when the event we are about to record took place, was a noble maiden, by name Eusebia, well worthy to bear that name, which signifies 'pious.' This noble virgin was one

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of a family of wealth and consideration; but from her tenderest years she had turned her thoughts from earthly rank and earthly riches to a heavenly inheritance; and, at the tender age of fourteen, she bade adieu to the honours and pleasures of the world, and, what in those days of early girlhood must have been far more trying, to her happy home, her mother's tender care, and came to lay her rich dowry, her rare beauty, and a devoted heart, all, without reserve, at the feet of her heavenly Bridegroom. Eusebia had ever been the pride and example of the Sisterhood, from the days of her fervent novitiate until the unanimous vote of the community had elected her their mother.

About this time frightful tales of the crimes and outrages committed by the barbarous Saracens began to penetrate the deep retirement of the convent; but it must have been very difficult, while their quiet life went on in its daily routine of duties and recreations, to realize the horrors under which the outer world was groaning; and it is probable that no personal terrors had disturbed Eusebia's Sisterhood, until suddenly the news fell on them like a thunderbolt, that the barbarians had carried their ravages to the very gates of Marseilles.

The terror and dismay which spread amongst the community may well be imagined. If it were only death which they had to fear, they would have awaited their murderers with calmness, for though human nature might shrink from the axe and the scourge, the memory of an Agnes, a Cecilia, and a Catherine would have nerved the weakest among them to endure the worst; but a deeper dread, a more overpowering horror oppressed the spotless spouses of Christ, as they pictured themselves in the unbridled power of such utter barbarians. Trembling and pale, they crowded round the altar like startled doves, and nothing was heard amongst them but groans of agony, broken supplications, and heart-rending sobs.

Amidst the weeping, trembling crowd, Eusebia

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alone retained her composure. At the first sound of the evil tidings she had sought the foot of the altar, and there she knelt now, her arms crossed on her bosom, her eyes fixed earnestly upon the crucifix, and her whole form immovable as a statue. Suddenly she started to her feet, the blood mantled to her forehead, and her eyes beamed like those of one who had received a sudden inspiration; but in a moment the blush faded from her cheek, and left behind it an ashy paleness; she trembled and closed her eyes for an instant, whilst her lips moved in inward prayer, then, turning to her Sisterhood, she spoke in a firm voice: "Dear children, follow me: our Bridegroom summons us; trust in Him!" As she spoke, she moved through the ranks of nuns towards the door. Hushed into awe and silence, the maidens followed her as she walked on towards a large crucifix, which hung at one end of the cloisters; down on her knees she sank before it, and the nuns followed her example. After a moment of earnest prayer, Eusebia rose up calmly, and pointing to the crucifix, she said:

"Sisters, He whose image you see before you feared neither pain nor humiliation when He died to make amends for the sensuality of His creatures. Look on His mangled body; there is no beauty there, and yet it is not represented as it really was,—our eyes could not endure the sight. Oh, my sisters, what have we, the followers of a martyred, a tortured God, to do with beauty? is it meet that we, His creatures, His chosen, should value these poor features above the crown of virginity which we have vowed ourselves to obtain? Courage, my children, let us save ourselves from outrage; let us, at least, enter pure into the presence of of our Bridegroom, however hard the trial, however thorny the road! Let those who feel as I do follow my example." And with these words she raised a knife, and with an unshaking hand severed her nose and ears, and covered her face with hideous wounds. There was a moment's pause; for a moment, perhaps,

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courage may have wavered, and hearts beat faintly; but if so, the womanly terror was quickly vanquished, every hand was stretched towards the saving weapon; every nun followed the example of their heroic leader; and when, some hours later, the Saracens invaded the convent, instead of the lovely bevy of maidens whom they had hoped would bring so high a price in the slave market, they found only a group of ghastly and bleeding images, who could inspire nothing but horror. Furious at being thus defeated in their end, the barbarians fell on their now resistless victims, and the noble troop of Christian heroines passed unspotted to their crown.

XXI.

THE LEGEND OF PLACIDUS.

DURING the reign of the Emperor Trajan, a man of great and distinguished virtue and renown, named Placidus, led the Roman armies victoriously against their Parthian foes. Possessing the grateful confidence of his royal master, Placidus, in his public character, was honoured and esteemed; whilst rich in the gentler virtues of domestic life, he was dear to all who mingled with him in private relationship.

He had a wife named Trojana, and two young sons, with whom, when a return of peace enabled him to leave the army, he retired to a country-house at some little distance from Rome.

There, in the enjoyment of boundless wealth and luxury, Placidus lived content. His home contained all that was necessary to fill up his measure of happiness,—riches, honour, earthly love; what more could be desired to satisfy a heathen soul? And Placidus was a heathen; not one of those joining inveterately in the cry of persecution, which, even in the days of Trajan the Merciful, arose from time to time against the infant

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Church of Christ; nay, from his natural benevolence, Placidus would have deprecated any act of violence against the Christians, just because they were poor and unprotected; but still he was a heathen, and shared avowedly in the universal feeling of contempt with which the immediate successors of the Apostles and their scattered followers were regarded. Who can tell, however, whether amidst his universal charities, some cup of cold water to a stray disciple, may not have been poured forth from a motive acceptable to the Searcher of hearts; or whether a fervent prayer, uttered in a moment of thankfulness by some Christian rescued from destruction, may have brought down upon Placidus the merciful regard of God? Who shall attempt to limit His grace, or ascribe motives to His providence? Suffice it that a wonderful hour was at hand for Placidus, which is thus recorded by ancient chroniclers.

He had a passion for the chase, and attended by numerous retainers and friends was accustomed to spend much of his time in the forests; finding in pursuit of stags and other game a recreation particularly acceptable to one so long accustomed to the activity of service in the field of battle.

One day that Placidus and all his gallant company rode out as usual to the chase, a herd of deer was started; and dogs and horses bounded forwards gladly in pursuit. One stag, larger and fleeter than the rest, attracted Placidus. He observed it separate from the herd; and it irresistibly drew him from his company. *They* followed the flying herd far away into the depths of the forest; whilst he, with an impetuosity that had even to himself something supernatural in it, tracked, closely as his panting horse could bear him, the footsteps of the majestic stag. Sometimes in one direction, sometimes in another, up steep ascents, and through precipitous and narrow thorny ways, it led him on. For a moment he seemed about to capture it; but again it was beyond his reach. On and on he went, forgetful of the time, the distance, the closing hour of the day.

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He saw nothing but the stag; he must gain it at last. Suddenly they had passed the thicket, and a bare hill was before them. The stag bounded to its summit, and turning, faced the astonished Placidus. Motionless it stood; and between its branching antlers, dimly discerned against the evening sky, arose a cross, encircled by a ring of light, piercing and dazzling, as no ray of sun or moon could kindle.

A voice of infinite tenderness then called him by his name. Touched in that moment to the very soul, Placidus sank upon his knees, and exclaimed, "Who art thou, Lord?" "Why persecutest thou Me, Placidus?" the voice replied. "I am the God thou ignorantly worshippest; Jesus, thy Lord. Thine alms and prayers have gone up before Me, and therefore am I come. As thou dost hunt this stag, so henceforward will I hunt thee." "Tell me Thy will, O Lord," cried Placidus, "that I may believe and perform it." The voice replied, "I am the Son of the living God. I created heaven and earth, and divided the light from the darkness. I appointed days, and seasons, and years. I formed man out of the dust of the ground; and for his sake took upon Me his own form. Crucified and buried, on the third day I arose again. "This I believe, O Lord," replied Placidus; "yea, and that thou art He who bringest back sinners to the way of peace." "If thou believest," returned the voice, "go into the city and be baptised. And return hither to-morrow, that thou mayest know of thy future life." Long wrapt in silent awe, Placidus remained upon that hallowed spot. Then, lighted by the moon, now high in the heavens, he pursued his way to the city, which he discerned at no great distance.

In those days of secret adherence to the faith of Christ, when a moment's delay might risk alike the conversion or the life of an applicant, no hour was too late for gaining admittance to the Christian bishop; and Placidus was therefore immediately ushered into his presence. Having related his wonderful adventure to the

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venerable man, and repeated his profession of faith, he was baptised by the name of Eustace; and returned before daybreak to the scene of his miraculous conversion. Then kneeling in prayer, he awaited the message of the mysterious voice. And thus it spoke to him: "Blessed art thou, Eustace, in that thou hast been washed with the laver of My grace, and thereby overcome the devil. Now hast thou trodden him to dust, who beguiled thee. Now will thy fidelity be shown; for he whom thou hast forsaken will rage continually against thee. Many things must thou undergo for My sake. Thou must become another Job; fear not, persevere; My grace is sufficient for thee. In the end thou shalt conquer; choose, then, whether thou wilt experience thy trials in thine old age, or forthwith."

And Eustace, with his new-born self-distrust, replied, "Even as Thou willest, Lord; yet, if it may be so, try me now, and help me in my trial." "Be bold, Eustace," spake the voice, for the last time. "Be bold; My grace can bear thee up." The wife and sons of Eustace, on hearing from his lips the wonderful things which had befallen him, were ready on the instant to believe in the Saviour who had manifested Himself so mysteriously, and were baptised that very day by the names of Theosbyta, Theosbytus, and Agapetus.

But a very short time passed by before Eustace became conscious of an extraordinary change in all his worldly prospects; and had not his faith risen triumphantly over all his pagan superstitions, he might have thought himself persecuted by the gods of his former worship for having treacherously abandoned them. But, enlightened by Divine wisdom, Eustace recognised with joy that his portion was no longer in this world; and that it was through a narrow way, unincumbered and single-hearted, that he was to follow his heavenly Guide.

One by one his treasures dropped away. Disease consumed his flocks and herds; his servants and retainers became faithless; friends looked coldly upon him. His

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house was plundered and destroyed; his possessions ravaged; he and his family gradually became destitute and homeless. In this state he resolved, for the sake of his family, to apply to Trajan; but the news of his conversion had already gone abroad, and even the emperor forgot his heavy obligations, and shunned his faithful servant.

Eustace then resolved on leaving his native land, and seeking in some distant country a new home, where he might peaceably bring up his children in the true faith. Journeying in this spirit to the sea-shore, he found a vessel about to embark, and entreated to be received amongst the passengers. From his appearance, the captain was about hastily to refuse, convinced that he had no means of paying for the voyage; but on perceiving the beauty of Theosbyta, his wife, a diabolical scheme entered his mind; he consented, and the Christian family set sail from Italy. No sooner had they reached Africa than the captain demanded payment; in vain Eustace pleaded his having been taken on board out of charity; the captain was resolute in pressing his claim; and on being assured by Eustace that he had nothing wherewith to satisfy it, he immediately seized Theosbyta, declaring he would sell her as a slave. Remonstrances and tears were vain; and lest the boys also should attract the cupidity of the heartless Roman, Eustace was compelled to land with them, and leave his beloved Theosbyta in his power. She herself even urged him to save himself and the children; willing herself to endure whatever trials might be appointed for her, so that they were spared.

So parted Eustace and his wife. His children now were all remaining to him in this world, once a treasure-house of joys. Silent and musing on the mysterious ways of God, but still without a murmur, Eustace, clasping the hands of his children on each side, walked forward through the desert country wherein he found himself. He had no longer an object consciously before him; and for miles he still went on, until the fail-

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ing footsteps of his young companions recalled his attention to their wants. He must now be father and mother both; where could he find food and shelter for them in the wilderness? They were now at the brink of a wide river, and on the other side Eustace perceived a group of trees which promised both nourishment and shade. Unable to swim with both the children at once, he first crossed the stream with Theosbytus, and placed him in safety on the other side; returning for Agapetus, what was the horror of the father, midway in the river, to hear despairing cries for help from both his sons at once. A lion had already seized Theosbytus, and the childish feet of Agapetus gave way beneath him as he turned to rush from an enormous wolf which sprung out of some bushes by the river side. By the time Eustace had struggled to the nearest shore both children had been carried out of sight. "Be it so, O my God!" cried Eustace, flinging himself face downwards on the ground. "Thy will be done; henceforward I am alone with thee!" And there for hours in silence and in prayer he lay immovable, and the sun scorched his uncovered head, and the cold dews of evening fell upon his exhausted limbs, and he was unconscious of all, except the presence of an unseen angel that came and comforted him. When human nature had wept its full, and divine consolations had strengthened and cleared his mind, Eustace arose once more, and journeyed on.

That night, on lying down to sleep desolate and homeless on the bare ground, a vision sent by God came like balm into his tortured heart. He seemed to see his children sporting with the ferocious beasts that had torn them from his side. Suddenly the scene changed, grown into young men and wearing the dress of soldiers, noble and in angel beauty they stood before him, their mother beautiful and calm drew near,—all were restored to him in that blessed moment; and when the vision had faded from before him, and the melancholy cry of the night-birds hovering above him,

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recalled Eustace to a sense of his bereavement, he still felt that tender comfort lingering in his mind,—he felt that he should yet meet with his beloved ones again in the land beyond the grave.

To find Theosbyta was the first object the returning faculties of Eustace entertained, when the sort of stupefaction which had followed his late trials began to subside; and every effort a man so poor and destitute of friends could make, he tried for long, but constantly without success. Hopeless at last, he committed the future to God, and settled himself down as the hired servant of a humble peasant. Here, a patient labourer, he toiled for years; never was a word of impatience or regret heard to fall from the lips of the once princely Eustace; he remembered the days of his former magnificence and luxury, but it was only to bow himself more willingly beneath the hand of God. "Thou doest all things well!" he whispered in his heart, and humbled himself literally to the dust. So fifteen years passed away; none knew the story of the silent and obedient labourer; he was more unwearied at his tasks, more faithful to his trust, more forgetful of himself than others; no one knew more than this; he never spoke but of necessity, and then never of himself.

In fifteen years his master died, and appreciating the patient fidelity of Eustace, bequeathed to him the humble cottage where he had served him so long; here then he still dwelt on, without a wish to change his life. Meantime peace no longer reigned in Rome, enemies were at her very gates. Trajan vainly thought upon the noble Placidus, who had ruled his armies with so powerful a spell, and led them on to victory with a resistless arm. Where was the general who had been so honoured and exalted in the moment of triumph, so carelessly discarded at a leisure hour? Oh, that Placidus were at Rome once more! An emperor's wishes are readily divined, more readily accomplished. There were few who would not gladly have undertaken to restore the forgotten Placidus had it but been possible.

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He was above their envy, he had been trusted, and was now wanted by all. Where could he have hidden himself? Several anxious to please the emperor, some trembling for the fate of their country, and a few from affectionate remembrance of the long-lost Placidus, immediately set forth in search of the absent commander; but there was no clue to his retreat; none knew when, or why, or how he had departed; and disappointment met the expectant emperor as party after party returned desponding from their unsuccessful search.

At length two former comrades of the hero, pushing in their generous zeal beyond the others, arrived one day, footsore and weary, before the cottage-door of Eustace, who hospitably bade them welcome, and hastened to offer them refreshment. Their uniform was a passport to his heart; it was fifteen years since he had seen a soldier. The men made inquiries of their host as to the fate of Placidus. Eustace started, but concealing his emotion, evaded their questions, for he had no desire to brave once more the dangers and temptations of the imperial city; but when he heard the anxious inquiries that had been made for him by his royal master, and the affection with which his name was still remembered at Rome, his heart was touched, and he hastily left the room. During his absence, the soldiers conferred together on his appearance, which reminded them strongly of the commander they were sent to seek; and remembering an old sword-mark which had honourably distinguished Placidus, they agreed to look for it in their host. On his re-entering the room, they accordingly glanced immediately at the back of his neck, and found the identical scar. Convinced that they had now discovered the object of their search, they laid aside all reserve, and spoke so earnestly with Eustace on the dependence that was placed on his generalship at Rome, and the dangers that threatened their country, that the determination of Eustace was gradually shaken, and he consented to return to his former master, and if possible serve him once again. The soldiers could

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scarcely realise that the once great and magnificent Placidus stood before them disguised in peasant's clothes. When last they saw him, he had reigned like a prince over the hearts of thousands. His palace had been like that of a king, his wealth boundless, his prosperity unclouded. They wept when they heard of his misfortunes and his trials, of his loss of Theosbyta and of his children.

The next day Eustace arose to leave the solitude where he had dwelt so long. Gladly would he have spent there the remainder of his life; he shrunk from the thought of Rome, the pagan city, rich in idol shrines and this world's luxury, underneath all which, in silence and concealment, bowed itself secretly the Church of God; but fearing that in this unwillingness to return there lingered more of selfishness and wilfulness than any better feeling, Eustace braced himself for the departure, and committing his future to the care of God, quitted his lonely dwelling with his guests.

As they journeyed towards the gates of Rome, the news that Placidus was found flew before them to the emperor's throne; he rose, thanked his gods for such a blessing, and came out himself to meet and welcome the returning hero; shouts and acclamations resounded on every side; amid the triumph of the people and their own more deeply-felt emotions, the emperor and his faithful servant entered Rome together. And now returned for Eustace the warlike days of Placidus; the army greeted him with rapture; a victory was now no longer doubted; joy and confidence filled every heart; thousands poured in to swell the imperial forces; there was nothing but glory in joining an army headed by Eustace.

Amongst the youths who crowded contending for this honour, two particularly attracted the attention of the general: he thought of his sons, his lost Theosbytus and Agapetus; had they lived, they would have been the ages of these striplings. Eustace placed them honourably, as they deserved, by all report, in his

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forces, and kept his eye upon them. The march began, and was continued until the army had advanced within sight of the invading enemy, who lay encamped within but a short distance of that melancholy coast where Eustace had been landed by the treacherous captain.

Night was stealing silently over the hushed camp; the soldiers slept, secure in the vigilance of their guardian sentinels, and Mars their patron deity. The two young strangers, however, still kept watch; and when all their preparations for the morrow were complete, they went out together to find some lonely spot where they might offer up their souls in prayer to God, for they were Christians. Unconsciously they took the very path which had led Eustace and his sons fifteen years before, and paused beneath the same group of trees which had allured him to cross the fatal river, on whose banks they stood. The young men hastened to throw themselves prostrate; but they started on perceiving that they were not alone—another worshipper knelt there—a woman, pale and bowed, and looking in the dim evening twilight so shadowy and motionless, that a sense of awe, as if in the presence of some supernatural being, mingled with the instinctive reverence that stayed the young men's noiseless footsteps on the grass: she saw them not, her eyes were fixed immovably; and words, whose tones had utterance of a sorrow deeper than goes forth in tears, fell slowly from her lips. In the profound stillness of the spot each word was distinctly heard: "My Eustace! my Theosbytus! my Agapetus!" They started at the words so suddenly that the woman turned her head and rose, but not in terror; she seemed like one who has nothing any longer to fear or hope. The young men knew already they were brothers, for they had long since told each other the wonderful tale of their preservation; and now, at the words of the kneeling woman, they doubted no longer they had found their long-lost mother. "Your name?" they gasped in one breath. "Theosbyta," she answered, scarcely looking at them. "Mother!" burst forth in

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one wild cry, as they threw themselves impetuously towards her. She shuddered at the name so long unheard, and sunk fainting to the ground; but joy in that instant had gone like healing balm into her wounded heart; and when her sons with tender care had poured water from the river on her brow, she once more opened her eyes, and gazed upon them with a rapture that withheld the power of speech. Meanwhile Eustace also sought the grove of trees, which he had already seemed to recognise: it would ease his heart to pour it forth in prayer for his Theosbyta before the day of battle; as for his sons, he doubted not they were already angels, gone in their baptismal innocence before the throne of God, to plead for him and their unhappy mother. The little group upon the grass attracted his attention, and as he quietly came onwards, the words "Theosbytus! my Agapetus!" from the reviving mother, struck on his ear. He paused: the remembrance of his former vision on this very spot came freshly back upon him, and for an instant a thought of spiritual visitations glanced over his mind; but on one of the young men looking up, he recognised the face of his young captain, who started on perceiving his commander; he knew not yet that Eustace, the leader of the Roman armies, was a Christian. Making a sign to his brother, Theosbytus rose upon his feet, and attempted to explain to the general that he and his brother had been just now miraculously restored to their long-lost mother; but Eustace heard him not; the names and the remembrance of his vision still filled his thoughts, and gazing intently on the pale Theosbyta, his faithful eye pierced through the veil that time and grief had wrought over her features, and in a stifled voice he asked, as just before her sons had done, "Your name?" "Theosbyta," she answered. "I am your husband," he replied, and folded her to his heart. "Father, our father!" cried the youths, and Eustace sunk upon his knees at the sound: "My wife, my sons! O God, Thou hast restored me all; how shall we glorify Thy name!" "The end

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must now be near," murmured Theosbyta; "remember, suffering was to be the portion of thy Christian life." "The will of God be done in all things," replied Eustace; and an "Amen!" echoed by his wife and sons brought peace into their hearts, almost too deeply moved by joy.

Then they prayed till morning's dawn, and then Theosbyta related to her husband how she had been kept as a slave by the wicked captain for many years of anxious misery, but that God had guarded her; and when, after her master's death, she became once more free, she had laboured and maintained herself, ever hoping that the day might arrive when her husband and her children might return to claim her. "And you, my sons," said Eustace, "by what miracle do I find you, whom I thought already torn to pieces by wild beasts?" Then Theosbytus told his father that the lion which had seized him, being pursued by hunters before it had time to do him any serious injury, dropped him to defend itself, whereupon he was taken home by some humane villagers, who healed his wounds and taught him to become a hunter; that some months after, he accidentally met with his brother, who had been rescued by shepherds from the jaws of the wolf; and that hopeless of recovering either of their parents, they had remained many years with the friendly villagers, until able to carry arms; when both becoming soldiers, they had risen rapidly in the army, and been chosen to bear honourable part in it when commanded to rally under Eustace.

The night rapidly wore away in such discourse; and with the dawn of day, kneeling together for a while in prayer, they embraced and parted.

Joy spread through all the ranks when it was known that Eustace had recovered his sons in the two brave young captains. That day the Romans fought victoriously; the presence of their leader inspired every man with confidence and courage, and news was sent to Rome that filled the emperor with delight. But the return of the army was for some time delayed; pursuing his con-

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quest, Eustace followed his retreating foes until he had driven them completely from the country, and then prepared to return to the imperial city. But meanwhile Trajan was no more; Adrian, his successor, filled the throne, and ordered every honour to be paid to the victorious general, that he might enter the city in triumph, as was wont on such occasions.

A day of feasting and rejoicing was proclaimed; and the emperor himself resolved to give it all the splendour that his presence could bestow, by presiding himself at the banquet. "But first," said he to Eustace, "we must satisfy the gods; let us hasten to the Temple of Mars, and make the offerings he has so richly merited at our hands." "My thanks," said Eustace, proudly, "have been already offered to the God I serve, nor can I bow my knee within a heathen temple." The emperor guessed not the meaning of this speech at first, but those who stood around him knew its purport well. "A Christian!" they murmured; "Eustace a Christian!" Adrian caught the word. "Art thou a Christian?" he demanded fiercely. "I am," said Eustace. "I am sorry for thee," was the reply; "but wilt thou not come and offer with us at the shrine of Mars?" "It is but to cast a little incense on his altar," whispered a friendly voice. "I will die first!" cried Eustace, kindling at the whisper, for he knew it to be that of one whom terror had long since won back to heathenism,—who had treacherously deserted the faith of Jesus, rather than die worthy of a martyr's portion. "Then die thou shalt!" cried Adrian furiously, fancying somewhat of insult in the unwonted energy of Eustace's decision. "I also am a Christian," "And I, O emperor!" cried out the manly voices of Theosbytus and Agapetus, whilst their father turned upon them a look half proud, half sorrowful, and then glanced upwards with a smile. Theosbyta was not far off; she heard and understood it all. "I also am a Christian," she said, as firmly as her trembling lips could utter the words, determined now to share the fate of her beloved ones, whatever that might be. Her

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words did not reach the emperor's ears, but they were taken up by those who stood around, and echoed from one to another till he heard and understood them. "There is but one fate for you all," he answered; "take them to the lions' den."

"Another and a better festival than that they had appointed for us is now provided, my beloved ones," said Eustace, as he gazed inquiringly on the faces of his wife and sons. But not a quiver of emotion was discernible; a holy smile of triumph and of joy lit up each countenance. "We shall be martyrs for Jesus Christ!" It was all they uttered as they were hurried away.

Crowds followed to behold the unexpected sight.

The amphitheatre was thronged to excess. So little sympathy was felt with Christians that even Eustace, on proclaiming himself one, had lost at once all title to their esteem. His victories were forgotten, or ascribed to arts of magic. Already the Christian family were exposed before the raging beasts; but not one would open its mouth against them. Calm and motionless, their hands folded on their breasts, they stood, and the hungry lions came and licked their feet.

This was attributed to some charm: "They have a charm against the teeth of beasts!" was echoed round the amphitheatre. "Away with them to the brazen ox!" the emperor answered; "they cannot quench his fury."

This was an enormous figure, made resembling an ox, and when heated by a fire underneath was used as an instrument of torturing execution to those victims who were placed within it. The fire was kindled, and the door in the side of the figure opened. One by one the martyrs ascended the ladder, entered the brazen ox, and lay down as if to sleep. The door was closed upon them, and the flames roared hotter and more fiercely upwards, whilst the immense multitude held their breath as one man, and a shudder of irrepressible horror ran through the heathen crowd. But not a cry or sound

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of anguish came from that fearful sepulchre; and the people remembered the wonderful smiles that had made radiant the faces of Eustace and his family as they disappeared one by one within its cavity, and looking on each other they marvelled how these Christians should go so lovingly to death. Then games and processions in honour of the victory went on, and they bowed themselves before the shrine of Mars, and Eustace the Christian was forgotten; but three days afterwards the brazen ox was once more opened. There lay the martyrs calmly, side by side; the same smile was on their faces, no change or smell of fire had passed over them. God had given His beloved sleep.

The martyred family still lives in the memory of the Church; and the Catholic traveller will recall their affecting story as he visits the stately churches which bear the name of St. Eustachius.

XXII.

THE SANCTUARY OF OUR LADY OF THE THORNS.

Not far from the highest peak of Jura there is still seen a heap of ruins, which belonged to the church and monastery of *Notre Dame des Epines Fleuries*. It lies at the very extremity of a narrow and deep gorge, but somewhat sheltered on the north, and so produces every year the rarest flowers of that region. At about the distance of half a league, the opposite extremity affords a view of the ruins of an old seignorial manor, long since gone, like the house of God. All that is known now is, that it was the mansion of an illustrious family, that signalised themselves in arms; and that the last who bore the name of that band of noble knights died fighting for the recovery of the Holy Land, with-

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out leaving an heir to hand down the name to posterity. The disconsolate widow did not fly from, but remained about the old grounds which so much afforded food to her melancholy; and the report of her piety and charitable deeds extended far and wide, so that her memory has been handed down to, and respected by, Christian generations. The people, who have forgotten all her other titles, still call her *the blessed one.*

On one of these days, at the close of winter, when the rigour of the season relaxes under the influence of a genial sky, the saint was taking her usual exercise, by walking along the avenue of her château, her mind occupied with pious thoughts. Having arrived at the thorny thicket terminating the avenue, she was not a little surprised at seeing that one of the bushes was already charged with all the decorations of spring. She quickened her steps, to assure herself that this appearance was not produced by any remains of the winter's snow; and, overjoyed at seeing it in reality crowned with a great number of beautiful small stars, she carefully removed one of its branches for the purpose of suspending it in her oratory, before an image of the Blessed Virgin, to which, from the days of her childhood, she was devoutly attached; and then returned, her heart surcharged with joy at being the bearer of this simple offering.

Whether it was that this feeble tribute was really pleasing to the Divine Mother of Jesus, or that a peculiar, undefinable pleasure is reserved for the slightest effusion of a tender heart towards the object of its love, the soul of the lady of the manor never experienced more thrilling delight than on that charming evening. With heartfelt joy, she promised to return every day to the blossomed bush, and from it to bring back daily a fresh garland. That she remained faithful to her engagement who can doubt? One day, however, when the care of the sick and indigent had detained her longer than usual, she was obliged to quicken her steps, to gain her wild shrubbery before nightfall. Her haste

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was vain, for darkness overtook her; and it is said that she began to regret having entered so far into this dreary wild, when a clear and softened light, like that preceding the rising sun, displayed at once before her eyes all the thorns in blossom. She arrested her steps for a moment, thinking that this light might proceed from the halting-place of brigands: for that it could be produced by myriads of glow-worms, brought out before their proper time, could not with any possibility be imagined; the season was still too far removed from the calm and close nights of summer.

Nevertheless, the obligation, self-imposed, presenting itself to her mind, and somewhat giving her courage, she advanced slowly with bated breath, took hold with a trembling hand of a branch,—which of itself seemed to drop into her fingers, so slight was the resistance offered,—and re-entered the way to the manor, without once looking behind her.

During all that night the lady reflected on the phenomenon, and yet could find no satisfactory explanation; and as she was determined to unravel the mystery, on the following day, at the same hour in the evening, she repaired to the thicket, accompanied by a faithful servant, and by her old chaplain. The same delicious softened light played about it as on the previous evening, and seemed to become, the nearer they approached, more bright and radiant. They stopped and placed themselves on their knees, for it seemed to them that this light emanated from heaven; then the aged priest arose, alone advanced respectfully towards the flowery thorns, chanting at the same time a church hymn, and removed them aside without the slightest effort. The spectacle then presented to their view so filled them with admiration, gratitude, and joy, that they remained a long time motionless. It was an image of the Blessed Virgin, rudely carved in wood, painted in rather lively colours by an unskilled hand, and dressed in simple attire; and from that it was that the miraculous light, with which the place was filled, emanated. "Hail

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Mary, full of grace!" said at length the prostrate chaplain; and the sound of harmony which arose in every part of the wood, when he had pronounced these words, would have induced one to imagine that they were repeated by the angelic choirs. He then solemnly recited those admirable litanies in which faith expresses itself, though unconsciously, in the highest style of poetry; and after renewed acts of adoration, he raised the image between his hands to bear it to the château, where he could find a sanctuary more worthy of it. As he moved on, the lady and her faithful domestic, their hands joined and their heads bowed, followed him slowly, offering up their prayers in union with his.

It is unnecessary to add, that the marvellous image was placed in an elegant niche, that lights blazed around it, that incense curled about its head, on which a superb crown was placed, and that even until midnight the chanting of the faithful offered it their greetings. But, strange to say, on the following morning no image could be seen, and no little alarm was felt by those Christians who experienced such unalloyed happiness at finding it. What unknown sin could have brought down this disgrace on the mansion of "the saint?" Why had the celestial Virgin quitted it? What new resting-place had she selected? There could be little difficulty in solving the mystery. The Blessed Mother of Jesus had preferred the modest retirement of her favourite bushes to the grandeur of a worldly dwelling. She returned to the coolness and freshness of the grove, there to taste the peace of her solitude and the sweet odour of her flowers. All the inmates of the château repaired there in the evening, and found it there, shining with even greater splendour than on the previous eve. They fell down on their knees in respectful silence.

"Powerful Queen of Angels," said the aged chaplain, "this, then, is the temple that you prefer. Your will be done."

And in a little time after, a temple gorgeous and rich—a temple such as could be erected only by the

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architects of those grand and glorious times—was raised to cover the revered image. The great ones of the earth enriched it with costly presents; kings endowed it with a tabernacle of the purest gold. The fame of the miracles wrought through it extended far and wide through the Christian world, and induced a great many pious women to fix their abode in the valley, and place themselves under monastic rules. The saintly widow, more touched now than ever with the lights of grace, could not refuse her assent to her appointment of superioress; and after a life of good works and edifying examples, which, like odoriferous incense, ascended at the foot of the altar of the Virgin, she died there full of days.

Such, according to the old records of the province, is the origin of the Church and Convent of Notre Dame des Epines Fleuries.

XXIII.

CATHERINE OF ROME.

During the time of the second visit of the great patriarch St. Dominic to the city of Rome, whilst waiting for the completion of the monastery of San Sisto, he was moved by the sight of the great corruption which prevailed among all classes of society; and though his stay there was very short, and had not been made with any intention of pursuing his apostolic labours at that time, yet he could not resist the appeal which the sins of the people made to his heart; and he accordingly commenced the reading of the holy Scriptures in the Papal Palace, with the view of remedying the idleness and vice of those attached to the court; whilst, at the same time, he preached daily in the churches to the commoner sort of people, gaining from both these labours an abundant fruit of souls. He also did much at this time by the preaching and propagation of the

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devotion of the Rosary; and among the many wonderful effects which followed on the adoption of this devotion, the following story is related.

There was at that time in Rome a woman, named Catherine, who had long lived in the violation of every law of God, and whose house was the resort of the gayest and most dissipated society of the city, over whom her beauty and talents gave her a fatally powerful influence.

This woman, although she had long neglected every duty of religion, was induced by the novelty which attached to St. Dominic's preaching, to go and hear one of his sermons. It made so deep an impression on her, that she went further; and receiving from his own hands one of the rosaries, which he was accustomed to distribute among the people after his sermons were ended, she kept it about her person, and began the daily recital of it; many years having passed since she had said a single prayer until that time. But long habits of a worldly and sinful life were not to be overcome by a temporary impression such as that effected by the preacher's words; and Catherine's new devotion produced no change in her manner of living. But God designed to make this soul a special monument of His mercy, and at the same time to mark, by the manner of her conversion, the power and efficacy which He is pleased to attach to the devotion of the Rosary. One day, as she was walking near her own house, there met her a young man of noble and majestic appearance, whose aspect filled her with an emotion she had never felt before. Addressing himself to her with a grace which, whilst it wonderfully attracted her heart, filled it at the same time with a certain sensation of awe, he bid her hasten home and prepare supper for him, for he was about to become her guest. Catherine lost no time in making every thing ready, and they sat down together at the table. But what was her surprise when she perceived that every thing which her new guest touched was immediately tinged with blood! At first

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she thought he must have cut himself with the knife, and therefore begged him to allow her, if such were the case, to bind up his wound; but he replied, "I have no wound; but do you not know that a Christian should eat no food which he has not first steeped in the blood of his Lord?" "In the name of God," said the terrified women, "tell me who you are, and what you desire of me?" "That you shall presently know," replied her guest; "but you must first order away these servants and tables, that we may be alone together." The order being duly obeyed, he rose from his seat, and in a moment she saw that his figure changed into that of a little child of surpassing beauty, yet a beauty rather divine than human. His face had all the loveliness of childhood, but the little head was crowned with sharp thorns; on his feeble shoulders he bore a heavy cross; while his hands and feet, beautiful in their childish proportions, bore the marks of cruel wounds, and his whole body was streaming with blood. It was a mixed representation of the two mysteries of the Divine Infancy and Passion. Catherine's heart smote her with a terrible remorse; all the iniquity and forgetfulness of her whole life came before her soul with a vivid intensity which well-nigh deprived her of reason; but the sweet voice of the Child Jesus revived her fainting spirits, as He said, "Enough of sin and hardness of heart, my sister; look here, and see what thy sins have cost Me, and what I began to suffer even when a little Child, and ceased not to endure up to the hour of My death." Then another change passed over the figure before her, and she saw Him as He appeared when dying on the Cross. Every bloody trace of His Passion was there; his face livid and disfigured, and the whole body bathed in the sweat of death. This vision lasted but a few moments; it changed yet once again, and then she saw Him so glorious and beautiful, that her eyes could not gaze at Him for the excess of light that shone from His person. It was not only from face and form that this glory beamed forth as from a sun, but

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every wound, which in the former visions had presented so fearful and ghastly an aspect, was now clothed with a wondrous beauty, beyond all human loveliness, and flashing with the brightness of a thousand gems. Then He spoke again: "Look at thyself," He said, "and look at Me. O blind and wandering sheep, return to the straight path and the safe fold; never forget what thou hast seen this day, for in these visions hast thou been shown the way of salvation." And with these words He disappeared.

It is not difficult to see that in these words of our Lord and the accompanying visions, meditation on the mysteries of His life and death which are given in the *Rosary* is what is pointed out as "the way of salvation." They had their full effect on Catherine; the joyful, sorrowful, and glorious mysteries, thus pictured to her eyes, remained imprinted also on her heart. She determined once more to seek St. Dominic; and relating to him the whole of what had passed, placed the direction of her future life in his hands; for he seemed to her as an angel of God sent to guide her yet further on that way of salvation which his words had been the first to open to her. In his hands her conversion was completed; and the rest of her life was spent in so penitent and holy a manner, that he himself acknowledged that he was filled with wonder at the transformation which, by the mercy of God, had been wrought in her soul. Henceforth meditation on those divine mysteries, which seemed in so special a manner to have been given to her for her guidance, was her constant devotion; and at her death (which took place many years afterwards, when she had distributed all her goods to the poor, and had herself retired to a life of strict poverty and continual prayer), it is said the Blessed Virgin appeared to her, and received her soul at the moment that she expired. Her body lies buried in the Church of St. John Lateran.

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XXIV.

THE MIRACLE OF TYPASUS.

Evening was setting in over the ancient city of Carthage, and bringing to its close a day of great and solemn rejoicing; bells had been ringing the whole day long, solemn processions had passed up and down the city, and on men's faces there was the impress of a joy too deep for utterance,—such joy as is known only to those who have endured the extremity of suffering. For the church of Carthage had received as her bishop this day the saintly Eugenius, after four-and-twenty years of widowhood and desolation; and all those earnest faces which crowd that ancient Basilica have known what it was to have been left orphans, without a head, to face alone the fury of a persecution almost unrivalled even in those ages of blood. Enter into the church, and you will feel that the mere surface of humanity has been swept away; the men and women and children even who surround you have tested the realities of life; and the future has nothing terrible for those who have borne themselves so manfully through the past. There is a calmness and grandeur about some amongst them which at once attracts your attention,—they seem, by common consent, honoured above the rest; if you look more attentively, you will see the insignia of their rank. Some maimed limb, some terrific gash or scar, bears witness that they have resisted unto blood for the faith of Christ; and thus the rage of the persecutor, while it has disfigured their earthly bodies, has placed upon their brows an aureole of glory even in this lower life. Listen: the heart of that mighty multitude goes up as the voice of one man in thanksgiving to God. That solemn ancient chant, it bowed the heart of the great Augustine, and made him weep, when but a few years before he heard it in that very church: what would he

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have felt had he heard it as it burst from the lips of those noble confessors and future martyrs of Christ! They thought not of themselves or their own sufferings; not one thought of self-gratulation marred the perfection of their self-abandonment; they thought but of the wrongs of Jesus; their hearts were bursting at the remembrance of the insults which for more than fifty years had been heaped upon Him before their very eyes; they were making an act of reparation, they were making atonement, they were thanking God for those mysteries of faith, that Christ was God, that God had died in human form for man. Far away over the blue Mediterranean the fisherman caught the sound, and stood up in his little boat, which looked all golden in the setting sun, and joined his heart to theirs. Far away the soft breeze bore it to the villages scattered amidst the Mauritanian mountains, sleeping in such a flood of light and spiritual beauty as is only to be seen beneath the sunsets of the south. And far, far above them all, and beyond them all, the watching angels caught the sound, and bore it before the throne of God. In its eager impetuosity of love it tried to make amends to the sacred heart of Jesus for more than half a century of blasphemy. Oh, who can doubt that it attained its end!

And now the newly-consecrated bishop stood upon the high-altar steps, his priests and attendants ranged in semicircles on either side. He was a man of tall stature and commanding countenance; but that peculiar expression which rendered it so different from others cannot be described, and is best understood when we remember that even in life he was reckoned among the number of the saints. As he stood there, addressing for the first time the flock which had been committed to his care, the first impression his calm clear voice made on the hearts of all was one of recollection, humility, and peace. The dove, wherein reposed the adorable body of the Lord, brooded above his head, and his words seemed rather the echo of the breathings of

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the dove than any thought or speech of earth. Few would have recognised in the calm subdued tones of that voice the expression of the ardent passionate spirit, who, like another St. Paul, would have wished himself anathema, rather than behold one of his children fall away from the faith; whose daily prayer was that he might die for Christ; whose nightly dream was that the crown of martyrdom was within his grasp. And while the saintly bishop goes back into the past, with his whole soul filled with thoughts of those among whom he had to labour, we too must look back and explain in brief words the circumstances which were the forerunners of the facts we are about to record.

The Roman provinces in Africa brought under the empire of the faith were at the very height of peace and prosperity. The voice of the great Augustine, that column of the Church, against which the fretful waves of false doctrine broke themselves in vain, was scarcely hushed in death; the Church of Carthage seemed to sit enthroned like a queen, by the shores of that sweet southern sea whose waters brought to her feet the learning, wealth, and respectful salutations of the rest of Christendom; on a sudden, men were roused from this deep sleep of security by a storm which overwhelmed them ere they were well aware of its approach. In the year 428, Genseric, the king of the Vandals and Alans, burst upon these fertile provinces with his huge barbarian armies, and in an incredibly short space of time the whole country was laid waste. These Vandals were, for the greater part, Arians, and joined the sacrilegious malice so peculiar to heretics to their native barbarity. We have neither power nor heart to describe what the Christians of those times were forced to look upon: the adorable body and blood of the Lord spilt and scattered on the pavements; the altar-linen made into shirts and under-garments by the blasphemers; bishops burnt alive; the virgins of Christ scourged, tortured, insulted; and the Catholics of noblest descent disqualified from holding any office,

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and condemned to keep cattle. Genseric died, and was succeeded by his son, Huneric, under whom the persecution went on more hotly than before. At last, at the earnest intercession of the Emperor Zeno, Huneric permitted the Church of Carthage to elect a bishop, after the see had been vacant twenty-one years. There had been small time for ceremony or preparation; the shepherdless flock, eager to enjoy the comfort of a pastor, with common consent pitched upon Eugenius, who had grown up amongst them from childhood in the odour of sanctity; and he, well knowing what he was doing, accepted the solemn call, knowing that the spousal ring with which he espoused the Church of Carthage was one of certain suffering, and almost certain death; knowing that the present lull in the storm would be of short duration, and that as soon as Huneric's policy would allow him to follow his fierce inclinations, *he* would be the first victim of his rage. Perhaps even his unshrinking heart would have quailed, if he could have seen in that moment the real life that lay before him; the long lingering martyrdom, harder far than death; the agony of betrayal and apostasy amongst some he trusted most. But we will not anticipate; but listen as he stands now, with the full glow of the setting sun upon his brow, and his piercing eye searching the very hearts of those whom he addressed. "Therefore, well-beloved children and brethren in Christ, bear ye the trial patiently, and wait for the end. Go on in the way of loftiness with the foot of lowliness, fearing only sin, which will easily make an apostate of a confessor. For how shall they be strong to confess the faith of the divinity of Christ, who dare to defile the members which are His? or how can they follow the meek Lamb in lowliness, whom any thought of pride uplifteth? Chastity, therefore, being the splendour of charity, and martyrdom the particular crown of both, humility is their safest guardian. Where these gifts abound, I have no fear that the weakest amongst you will fall away beneath any temptation: yea, even

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the tender and delicate woman shall be strong, and offer up her child to death, gazing on the Mother of God beneath the Cross."

The sun sank into the sea, and sudden twilight fell upon that mighty crowd; the mystic dove glittered in the lamps which burnt around the relics of the martyrs. Something in the solemnity of that moment thrilled upon the chord so closely buried in the heart of Eugenius. He burst forth: "O angels of my God, intercede for us! O glorious patriarchs and prophets, plead for us! O blessed Peter, keep not silence now! O great and most beloved Father Augustine, more great and beloved now than when on earth, from the secure haven unto which thou hast attained, look down on us, thy desolate flock, tossed and driven on these stormy seas!

"And you, O children of saints! O brethren of martyrs! remember ye belong to Christ, who suffers in your torments, and prepares for you an immortal crown. Soon shall the Red Sea of martyrdom be passed; soon shall the maimed and tortured body rest in peace; soon shall the everlasting nuptials of the Lamb be celebrated, and He will lead the choice ones of His flock into those heavenly pastures, whereof, methinks, the very grass are joys. Therefore go on with stedfast foot, praying for yourselves and for our unworthiness that we may attain this crown." Then raising his hand, he blessed them in the name of the thrice Holy Trinity; and men left the "house and the dove" in peace.

We will conduct our readers over some space of time, in which the pledge Eugenius gave that day was well redeemed, and leaving Carthage, travel westward to the ancient city of Typasus. The little Arab village of Ifessed now occupies its site; and the ruins which attract the admiration of the traveller of the present day sufficiently prove its grandeur in the days of its Roman occupation. But at the time of which we are speaking, the graceful columns which surround the forum had escaped unscathed from the hand of the bar-

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barian; and the arches which spanned the broad "Via Scipiano," which led to it from the city gates, still told the tale of earthly triumphs which had been celebrated there. That way was soon to become a "Via Crucis," and the power before which the mistress of the world had sunk into the dust was to be laughed to scorn upon that spot. But now through the deserted streets of that old city two men are passing quickly: one a venerable old man in the dress of an ecclesiastic; the other clearly showing by his fair complexion, keen blue eyes, and short, firm-set stature, that he was one of the warlike children of the north. As they passed by house after house, whose open portal and unkindled hearth showed that it was forsaken, a party of men brushed rudely past them, the foremost of whom was speaking in a loud voice of the measures soon to be taken with that "dog of an intruder, Eugenius." The hot blood of the northman mounted to his cheek in a moment, and, clenching his teeth, he drew the short sword which depended from his belt, muttering, "The wretch! the blasphemer! never shall he take that venerable name within his lips again while I—" "My son," said the old priest, laying his trembling hand upon his lips, "well may it be seen that you are but a catechumen in the school of Christ, when words like these spring to your lips so readily. For the sake of your saintly Master, hold your peace until we reach the open shore; there shall we be in safety from the unfriendly ears which now may overhear our speech." Theobald bit his lips till the blood came; but his hand traced the sign of the cross, and the fury which his Scandinavian ancestors deemed perfectly uncontrollable yielded to its might. They passed on in silence along the broad-way, across the forum, until they gained the sea-shore. Calm and wonderfully beautiful was the scene they gazed upon: the long level sands, where the waves rippled up to the very line they had worn when the ships of old Rome bore Scipio to the conquest of this new world. To the east lay the mausoleum of the royal

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family of Massinissa, now vulgarly called "the tomb of the Christian." Above the resting-place of the dead, one fair solitary palm-tree stood out against the deep blue sky, bringing remembrance of her of whom the Church sings, that amidst the desert and the tombs of earth she was exalted as a palm-tree in Cades. The quiet of the time and place seemed to still the stormy spirit of the northman; but when the priest turned to him, as though to ask his thoughts, he burst forth, "Men live amid these scenes of blood till they learn indifference. Your people are driven into exile, and you walk calmly through their desolate homes; you hear those savage threats against Eugenius the holy, the wise, the good, and it scarcely stirs your blood." The old man gazed out upon the waste of waters, as though other scenes than those he looked on were before his mind's eye. He paused long before he spoke, and then seemed rather thinking aloud than answering his companion: "Four little months ago yon sea was alive with boats, bearing their living cargoes to the ships which lay in the offing. All along this line of sand there were groups of people in tears; there were partings between those who shall meet no more on earth. Son was torn from mother, friend from friend, priest from people. As each little boat bore the exiles from the shore, they stood up and stretched out their arms towards Typasus, and mournfully waved their adieus to those they had left to die within its walls. One old man was amongst them, whose spirit was worn out by the long harassing struggle with the Arian intruders. His flesh quivered and shrank with inexpressible horror at the thought of torture and insult and violent death. He looked to the distant shores of Spain as a land at least of rest and a quiet grave. He was one of the last to embark, and as he looked back sorrowfully to the land he was leaving, a form seemed to float upon the edge of the blue waters, and that face of unspeakable sorrow gazed reproachfully upon him, and a voice breathed into his inmost soul, 'Can it be that

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thou fearest to stay and feed those few sheep in the desert?' He hesitated not a moment: he leaped from the boat into the water; he rejoined the forsaken band of those who, from infirmity or poverty, could not embark,—the little knot of noble confessors, who, from their longing for martyrdom, would not embark. Love rekindled the failing torch of faith. He went with joy and singing in his heart to console his children,—to suffer and to die with them. My son, call not the old man *indifferent* because his God has given him the gift of patience." Theobald fell on his knees and pressed the old man's hand to his lips; he would have poured out his repentance for his unjust and hasty words, but the priest checked him, saying, "Enough, my son; I know all you would say. Now may you deliver to me in all safety the bidding of our holy bishop; but first will it please you to declare, in brief words, all that has passed at Carthage since the last burst of this fierce storm. Small communication hath there been between the churches since it broke forth, and the last messenger Eugenius despatched to us was taken and slaughtered on his way."

"My father," replied Theobald, "it is but little I can tell of the first outbreak, for I was not in Carthage; I only joined Huneric with the last troops which came from Spain; but I found Eugenius' name on the lips of all, as one whose sanctity and wonderful gifts made him master of all hearts, and excited against him Huneric's especial rage. I heard the first order Huneric sent him was to shut the church against the Vandals, who were beginning to embrace the faith in numbers. Eugenius' reply was, 'Tell Huneric that the door which the King of kings hath opened, none may dare to shut.' Huneric burst out with a torrent of curses, and the next day witnessed a scene that it passeth my poor wit to describe. Guards were placed at the doors of the churches; and when any one passed in clothed in the habit of a Vandal, they struck them on the head with a short, rough, jagged staff, and twisting it into the hair, vio-

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lently dragged off both hair and skin together. The agony was so intense that many died, and many lost their eye-sight; but not one would give up their faith." Theobald covered his eyes, as though to shut out the horror of the remembrance. The priest asked him in a calm voice, "And the women,—did they stand firm?" "Most stedfast," answered Theobald; "it was the sight of the strength made perfect in their weakness that first drew me, a wandering sheep, into the fold. I saw one, Dionysia, a matron of noble birth and most delicate nurture, scourged till she sank fainting in her own blood. During the torment, I saw her gaze fastened on her young son, Majoricus, who stood weeping beside her, with a devoted tenderness such as in our colder lands I never witnessed. All the mother's heart was in that gaze. When they had wreaked their will on her, they turned to the son. His cheeks grew pale at the horrid preparations, and at the first touch of the torturer's hand he uttered a shriek of horror. That shriek roused the mother from her death-like swoon; she started to her feet, and in a voice which thrilled through the whole place, she said, 'Remember, O my son, we were baptised in the name of the Holy Trinity, and the bosom of our Mother the Church.' Then, with most lofty words, she went on encouraging him, as he endured the torment with heroic courage and when he could no longer stand, his burning head was laid upon her lap; and while the flesh to which she gave birth was quivering in agony before her, she perpetually traced upon it the healing sign of the cross, until she received the last sigh of the victorious martyr. That scene, that martyrdom, that mother, purchased for me the gift of faith; and not for me only,—four of us, ere that night closed in, knelt at the feet of Eugenius to ask for admittance to the Catholic Church." "O noble confessor of Christ!" exclaimed the priest softly, "thou like Abraham hast sacrificed thy only son, and thou hast become the spiritual mother of many children in Christ. And the end, my son?" "She so longed to possess the precious remains of her

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child, that several of us went in the night to the place of execution, and succeeded in bringing them to her. She buried them in her own house, that, as she said, she might day by day offer to the Holy Trinity her prayers over his grave, in the lively hope of a glorious resurrection with him. And there the childless solitary mother offers the daily sacrifice of her life." "And the clergy?" asked the priest—"are any spared?" "Scarce any are left in Carthage," replied Theobald. "Eugenius does every thing, and is every where; he moves like an angel of consolation through the miseries of the times; and the love of his children for him is strong as death. The moon is not new since nearly 5000 bishops and priests, and noble Catholic laymen of Carthage, were banished by the tyrant's order to the deserts. There they were to be left the prey of scorpions and venomous serpents, to be fed with barley, like beasts. Numbers of the people followed their bishops and priests to the very borders of the desert, as though in triumphal procession, with tapers in their hands. Eugenius stood forth, an envoy between the living and the dead, and said they must now return, for their time was not yet come. Then the air was rent, not with the cries of those who were descending into this living grave, but of those who were returning to life. Mothers cast their babes at the feet of the confessors, and exclaimed, 'O confessors of Christ, ye pass on swiftly to your crowns, but to whom do you leave your desolate flock? Who will baptise our children? Who will bury us with solemn supplication after death? By whom shall the Divine Sacrifice be offered up amongst us?' Then Eugenius raised his voice, and stilled that mighty cry. He told them a beacon should be kindled that day amid the dreary sands of the desert, which should lighten the Christian world; that if their voices were hushed in death, God would raise the dead, or make the dumb to speak, rather than allow His truth to be without a witness. Then prostrating at the feet of the principal bishop amongst them, he kissed them, and asked his

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benediction, and all the people prostrating to receive it. Eugenius led them back to Carthage, with solemn hymns of thanksgiving for those who were counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ. Tidings have since been brought us, that not one of those terrible serpents have dared to approach the confessors."

"Yea, the desert shall blossom as a rose," said the priest, fervently. "How sweet is the perfume it is now sending up in the sight of the company of heaven! But, my son, the hour is waxing late, and I may not tarry longer from my post at this moment; I would fain hear the message of the blessed Father Eugenius ere we part for the night."

"They are evil tidings," said Theobald, after a pause. "I would I had not been their bearer. Father Eugenius bids me say that secret intelligence has reached him that the fury of Huneric is especially directed against Typasus at this moment. The Arian bishop has informed him of your stedfast opposition to his intrusion—of your courageous celebration of the Tremendous Mysteries—of the unshaken constancy of your band of confessors. Huneric is mad with fury at the fruitlessness of his efforts; and Eugenius says that even now his fierce bands are preparing to do their worst. What that worst may be no one knows; but the bishop sends you health and benediction in the Lord; and not doubting of your crown, he bids you remember him when you shall have entered into rest."

A slight paleness overspread the countenance of the old priest as these words reached his ear; but it passed in a moment, and raising his eyes he exclaimed, "O my dear and well-beloved Master, for fourscore years and more Thou hast done good things unto me, and now thou dost suffer me to give Thee all that remains of this miserable life. Blessed be Thy Holy Name." Then turning to the youth he said, "Blessed be thou of the Lord, my son, for the good tidings thou hast brought me this day. Return to Eugenius by the way of the sea, that thou mayest escape the hands of

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the barbarians; and tell him, by the grace of God, we will redeem his word, that the beacon which has been kindled in the desert waste shall be caught and answered on the towers of Typasus; and men shall know and own that He is God who giveth victory to the weak and contemptible things of this world. And now depart quickly, my son," he said, laying both hands on the head of the youth, who knelt in speechless emotion to receive his parting blessing. "It seemeth to me that the sun will soon rise, which shall not set until thou hast given thy best heart's blood for thy Lord. But the time is not yet; therefore depart in peace, and do my bidding with the holy bishop. Farewell."

Day dawned over the fair city of Typasus, but found it not as the sun had set upon it. In the dead of the night the furious tramp of the wild undisciplined troops of Vandal barbarians announced to the devoted band that the hour of their trial had arrived. It found them prepared and watching. It had been agreed that three strokes of the bell should assemble them all in the house where they were wont to celebrate the Divine Mysteries; and the old priest and the subdeacon Reparatus kept watch. The solemn signal sounded about the hour of midnight, and they had scarcely collected all that remained of the inhabitants of Typasus ere the armed barbarians poured in at the city gates, and in a moment seemed to fill the streets and the air with their cries and blasphemous imprecations; hundreds came, and thousands followed, to sieze this helpless band of Christian heroes. It seemed as though Huneric hoped by the mere multiplication of animal strength to subdue that spiritual energy and force which had so often proved too much for him. They soon discovered the little assembly of Catholics, and drove them mercilessly before them to the forum outside the gates. "Even so He passed beyond the gate of Jerusalem," said the solemn voice of the priest, as urged by the pitiless goad-

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ing of the swords, their ears stunned with the blasphemies and insults shouted around them, some of the weaker sort stumbled and fell. As soon as they reached the forum they were fastened all together in the midst with thick ropes; a strong band of horsemen was left to guard the place till morning dawned, and the rest of the Vandals dispersed throughout the city to spend what remained of the night in revelry and feasting. Meantime the confessors received the last words of reconciliation and blessing from their pastors; they strengthened one another for the fiery trial which awaited them; they gave each other the kiss of peace, and sang their "Nunc dimittis" with joy. As the sun rose gloriously out of the sea, they saluted it with a hymn of triumph, as the dawning of that happy day which should see them suffer for Christ. About the hour of Prime the forum was surrounded with their eager persecutors; and it was with great difficulty that the chief of the band secured silence for a moment with a flourish of the wild unmusical horns they were accustomed to use in battle. Then riding slowly into the arena, he shouted, "Citizens, the children of the north deal not in many words. One chançe, and one only, of life and liberty and honour lies before you. Submit to the bishop whom Huneric by rightful authority has placed over you; deliver up the fellow who has dared to act as your priest; consent only to be baptised amongst us, and you shall be received like brothers, and Huneric will show he knows how to treat his friends. This, of his mercy and great clemency, he offers once; he *never* offers mercy twice." There was not a moment's pause—clear and strong went up the voice of that united band, "We were baptised in the faith of the Catholic Church, and in her bosom we will die. For Christ is very God, and the virgin Mother of God stood beneath the cross of her Son." There rose a sound from the surrounding soldiery like the growl of a wild beast; scarcely could their commanders hold them back from darting on their prey, and tearing

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them to pieces. "Dogs!" shouted the chief through the tumult, "hear, then, the too-merciful decree of Huneric. Your blasphemous tongues shall be torn out by the roots, and your right hands cut off, and dogs shall devour them before your eyes." More he would have said, but the roar of the angry multitude drowned his words. Every semblance of order vanished.

A troop of ruffians appointed for the purpose rushed into the place. They seized them as they stood, and, without any preparation, began the work of butchery. The old priest was the first victim. He was violently seized by the hair and hurled to the ground; and as he meekly stretched out his right hand to the gleaming axe of the barbarian, he murmured, "Holy Father, grant me only in that day to say, Of those whom Thou hast given me I have lost not one." The Vandal then knelt upon his breast, and spitting in his face, pulled the tongue out by the roots with such terrific force, that it is marvellous life remained. And so it went on. The subdeacon Reparatus was the next, uttering his confession of faith while the torturer's hand was in his mouth, till all those noble confessors lay prostrate in a Red Sea of blood; their mutilated members lying all around them, sometimes cast to the dogs by their savage foes. And now even *they* seemed satiated. Human nature seemed laid as low as human hands could thrust it. Speechless, bleeding, mutilated, what more could those well-nigh lifeless bodies do? what more could be feared from them?—so at least their persecutors thought; and preparing to leave them to their fate, the foremost, giving a contemptuous kick to the prostrate form of Reparatus the subdeacon, exclaimed, "Ha, blasphemer! thou art silenced once and for ever now: why stand ye not up and preach as of old, of a God dying on a cross, and a woman, the mother of a God? Choice witnesses are ye truly, lying there speechless, of the divinity of your Christ!" Reparatus knelt up: soft, low, and clear arose the words from his lips, "I believe;" and then a chorus of voices joined in from

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that prostrate band, finishing the sentence, "The Christ is very God of very God; and Mary the Mother of God stood beneath the cross of her Son." Then as the mighty marvel flashed upon their minds, a cry, strong, thrilling, but most musical, burst from their lips, "Alleluia, alleluia to the Lamb who sitteth on the throne; He hath done all things well; He maketh both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak." Earth and heaven and hell stood attentive as that wondrous song went up. Huneric's fierce barbarians fled in wonder and amaze; and hour after hour the confessors knelt on the spot of their torture, giving God thanks for the miraculous gift He had vouchsafed that day. Their sound went forth into all lands. Constantinople, and the Isles of the Sea, and the fair fields of France, were blessed by the presence of these wondrous witnesses of the truth; and ever as the "Credo" came from their lips, it carried conviction to the hearts of all who heard them, of the might of God's power, and the strength of His Church.

Years passed on: the career of Eugenius was still bright with saintly deeds and unfailing perseverance. In long exile, in imprisonment, under every kind of contumely, with his head laid upon the block and the axe gleaming over him, he was still the same,—the unshrinking confessor of that precious faith, dearer to him than life. Still it seemed as though the yearning longing of his soul might not be gratified; he was to live and suffer, not to die. A winter night had set in drearily; the holy bishop sat alone in a rough, rude hut, which scarcely offered any resistance to the piercing blast which swept through it from the mountains. The wide desert country of Tripolis lay round him. He was a prisoner in the hands of Anthony, an Arian bishop, who made his exile one unvarying round of sufferings, to which his eager love of the Cross continually added more. He was writing by the dim lamp, when suddenly a mysterious awe and terror fell upon him, for which he could not account. "The Evil One is busy," he muttered

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to himself; and leaving his writing, he betook himself to prayer. It was no wonder that the pastor should suffer and fear exceedingly, for that night two stars had fallen from heaven. The next night the door of the hut was softly opened, and Reparatus the sub-deacon knelt before him. He spoke no word, and the strong man's face was wet with tears. "Speak, my son," said the bishop; "is Eugenius so little used to suffer, that thou fearest to tell thy tidings?" Reparatus lifted up his face, and spoke in the low tone of one whose heart is torn by every word he utters: "The lamps of the sanctuary are defiled, and their light is gone out in utter darkness. The two confessors whom you wot of at Tripolis have fallen into deadly sin, and they are speechless. In their misery they have fled away into the desert, and we have come to ask counsel of your holiness." The bishop clasped both his hands over his face, and bowed it on the table before him; and when he raised it, the trace of agony left upon it was deeper than that left by years of exile and suffering. He rose and gathered his mantle round him, as though he would have started instantly to seek the lost sheep; and then the remembrance of his imprisonment came upon him, and he sat down again and wept. At last, recovering his calmness, he said, "Let prayer be made for them throughout all the Churches, that the mercy of God may bring them to repentance: and do you, my son, bid those of our brethren who remain stedfast take heed lest they fall. Let them count *that* forgiven them from which they have been preserved through grace; and for that in which they have not been tried, let them walk heedfully, and be instant in prayer."

Eugenius died at last in exile, full of good works, and in a monastery which he himself had founded. Perhaps, as he looked back upon all the varied sufferings of his long and agitated life, the agony of that night was the only one which seemed worth remembering. But the tears which the saints of God weep for the

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sins of others shall all be wiped away in the morning of the resurrection.*

XXV.

THE DEMON-PREACHER.

THERE was in a town of Italy in the early part of the 14th century a convent of Franciscan monks, who followed the rule of their holy founder in its utmost strictness. The spirit of Francis seemed to be alive again among his children, so rigidly did they adhere to the constitutions he had left them, and specially to the religious poverty which he had loved and chosen as his bride. Never had they departed from that law which sent them daily from house to house, begging the alms of the faithful as their only support. You might meet them every day, treading barefoot through the dirty streets in their poor rough habits, carrying a coarse bag on their backs to receive the scraps of food which some would give, who were too poor to offer more; or driving the convent ass before them, laden with the wood-chips they had gathered together. Pictures they were of that meek, patient, suffering spirit which is the heritage of their order; and yet, for all their lowliness and poverty, they carried about with them a certain air of spirituality that made you feel disposed to uncover as they passed, for they bore back your imagination to Judea and the streets of Jerusalem, and filled you with the thoughts of One who was the first to stamp the mark of holiness upon the abjection they imitated so well. Now, at the time of which we

* The truth of the miracle recorded above is as well ascertained as any fact in history. It has recently been critically examined, and the proofs thrown together, by Victor de Buch, of the Society of Jesus. The facts of the Vandal persecution in Africa are too well known to require any authentication here.

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speak, the inhabitants had lost something of that fervent charity and devotion that had made them at first so ready with their alms when the friar's little box was offered at their door. They were growing rich, and their hearts were narrowing; and often the poor Franciscans were driven away with curses and abuse, and many a hard word was levelled against the "idle mendicant." Still they lived, hardly enough, yet contentedly; contempt and ill-treatment were like a sweet savour to their scanty food; and they never thought of complaining at what seemed as much a part of their state as the habit that they wore.

Now this resignation and lowliness of spirit were very displeasing to the great enemy of souls, who eyed these poor despised friars of Lucca as the greatest adversaries he possessed in the town. He determined, therefore, on making a powerful effort to shake their constancy and endurance; and in order to effect this, to shut the hearts of the citizens yet more against them, by temptation of avarice and selfishness, which he knew well enough were the likeliest to prevail, and could scarcely fail of success. His designs answered as he expected: the people of the town became gradually more and more hardened against the friars; and the very appearance of one of them in the street was a signal for every door to be closed. At length the alms, which were their only resource, entirely failed, and the distress of the brethren became excessive. There was one of the citizens named Louis, the richest man in the town, who had lately married a young and virtuous wife, and to his door the father-guardian directed the last appeal for assistance to be made; for Octavia (such was the name of the merchant's wife,) was known to entertain friendly and charitable feelings for the order, and had never yet allowed the friars to go away without giving them some trifle for the love of God.

It was late in the day when the poor brother whose charge it was to beg for alms knocked at the door of

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Louis's house. He had been on foot for many hours, and his bag was still empty; and he felt weary and discouraged. It was a timid knock that he gave; and perhaps the faintness of its echo told the master of the house what kind of visitor was standing at his gate; for when the door opened, and the good friar raised his eyes from the ground, half in hopes to meet the kind looks of Octavia, he saw that the merchant Louis himself stood before him, and in no gentle mood, to judge from his knit brow, and the quick rough movement of his hand.

"What brings you here, friar?" he said, with a contemptuous sneer; "back to your convent and pray, as is your trade; or if that suits not your holinesses, why, work like honest men; we will have no vagrants here."

"May it please you, good sir," replied the trembling friar, "I thought to see the Lady Octavia. It has pleased our Lord to try us during this last week as seems good to Him, and none of us have broken fast this day; but you will scarce refuse to help us for His love;" and he held out his little box with a hesitating and pitiful glance.

"The Lady Octavia forsooth!" returned the other; "let her look well to it ere she have aught to say to you. Begone, I say; for I make not my money in order to throw it after all the beggars that may choose to hang about my gate. Begone, and fast if you will; you are ever ready to tell us it is profitable to our souls." He turned, and would have shut the door; but the friar made another attempt to speak.

"Good sir," he said, "I beseech you to be patient; we have verily toiled all the day, and have taken nothing; send me not away empty, and God will reward you for your charity, even as though you did it to Himself. The Lady Octavia hath ofttimes bidden us ask freely when we were in need;" but his words were interrupted by the heavy blow of a stick.

"Say that name again, and I will send you home

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with broken bones to fill your bag," was the angry reply. "Here, good neighbours, help me to drive this fellow to his hole again;" and at his words the bystanders, who had gathered together at the sound of the altercation, pressed closer round the person of the friar, and began to hoot and clamour after him as he moved away, whilst some, bolder than the rest, threw mud and stones upon him, bidding him carry them back to the convent to fill his bag. And as he passed along, the crowd grew every moment more numerous and angry, till, when they came to the convent-gates, it was a hard matter for the poor friar to effect his entrance, without receiving serious injury from some of those who pressed about him.

That evening the friars went indeed to their refectory, but it was not to eat. They sat, with heavy hearts and downcast eyes, whilst one of them read aloud, as was their custom; and the tables were covered as usual, but there was not a morsel of bread. And the next day things were worse, for the riot of the previous evening had roused the attention of the governor of the town; and he came to the convent, and tried, partly with threats and partly with persuasions, to induce the brethren to abandon a place where they had become the object of popular dislike, and where their presence only disturbed the public quiet. The courage of many of the friars was fast failing them; they made a fair show to the governor, but as soon as his back was turned, the general feeling of discontent and despondency began to manifest itself.

"We had done better to have accepted lands like other of our communities," said one. "Our father Francis meant not that his children should perish for their keeping of the dead letter."

"It were well to sell the silver vessels," said another; "perchance this trouble comes on us for over-richness in our church furniture: if we be sons of poverty, wooden vessels will serve our turn, and befit us best."

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The father-guardian heard it all, and knew not how to answer.

"Know you not, my children," he said at length, "that we may neither retain lands, nor sell any goods for our own maintenance, without breaking those twenty-five precepts which our father left on us, and which bind us under mortal sin? Fear not for the future; for God Himself has surely promised His help to them that keep the same; and His promises are not void." But though he spoke thus, the brothers could hear in the tremour of his voice that his heart was not wholly with his words; his confidence was faltering with the rest; and the triumph of the devil seemed as though it were soon to be complete.

And he knew it. He was there in the midst of those fearful failing hearts, terrifying them and tempting them,—filling them with a strange unaccountable dread, by the unseen influence of his presence. And as they yielded to the cowardly suggestions he was whispering in their ear, he was every moment gaining more and more power over their hearts. He was then watching them with an infernal joy; but the joy was very short: it was broken by a light that glanced across his vision; and a voice sounded in his ears, whose echoes were well known to him, and filled him with the old anguish, and reminded him of his conquest and defeat. It was the voice of Michael. "Fallen Star of the Morning," said those angelic tones, "wherefore art thou here? I come to drive thee hence, and once more to humble thy pride."

"Thou mayest do thy will," returned the malignant spirit; "but I, too, have had mine: there is not one of all these friars but has done me good service this day, for they have doubted God's word and mistrusted His promise. I am well content to go, and leave them thus."

"But not thus shalt thou leave them, O perverse and evil serpent," returned the archangel: "if thou hast

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done thy work, thou shalt also undo it; thine own lips shall recall these poor children who have erred through weakness, and shall bring Louis also to a better mind, and shall restore charity to the hearts of the citizens; yea, so that of their own will they shall build another convent within these city walls, where God shall be served and praised, and the rule of Francis, which thou so hatest, shall be strictly kept. This is the decree of the Most High, who changeth not."

The demon gnashed his teeth. "I am no preacher," he cried; "and I fight not against mine own house,—least of all will I do work for that Francis of whom you speak, for he was ever my deadliest enemy."

"Therefore is it given thee as a punishment for thy malice to do even as he would do were he again on earth," replied Michael; "and thou must obey. Thou shalt take the form of one of his friars, and shalt enter the house; and good words shall flow from thy lips against thy will; and thou shalt recall the friars to trust and confidence, and shalt reproach them for the shameful yielding of their hearts; and shalt strengthen them with holy speech and words of comfort. Moreover, thou shalt thyself procure them the means which they lack, so that their sufferings shall cease, and they shall have wherewith to feed the poor at their gates as of yore; and so shalt thou learn well what it is to fight against God and His saints."

There was a knock at the convent-gate, and the porter opened it timidly, for he scarcely knew what to expect. A monk, dressed in the rough habit of the order, stood without; but it was not one of the community, and the good friar did not recollect ever to have seen him before. A singular majesty of bearing might be discerned even through that poor despised garb of poverty,—something too much of the air of command, as some might have thought; but yet the grandeur and nobleness of his aspect, and the bright flash of his eye, gleaming beneath the thick hood covering his face,

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seemed to compel respect. "I would speak with the father-guardian," he said; and the tone of his voice was signally musical. The porter bowed in silent wonder, and led him to the presence of the assembled religious, who were in the act of making their final preparations for removal.

"*Deo gratias*, my brethren," was his salutation; and the sound of his voice startled them strangely.

"Mother of God!" exclaimed the astonished guardian, "who are you, brother, and whence do you come?"

"I come from very far, and I was led here by the hand of God," replied the stranger; "so very far away was I when it was laid on me to come hither, that doubtless were I to name it, you would not know it; for it is a country little spoken of, and the sun itself shines not on it as on yours."

"And your name, good brother; you are of our order?"

"I am called Obedientus Obligatus; and I wear your habit, as you see. In old days, before I put it on, they called me Cherubino."

"Well, good brother," replied the guardian, "you are surely welcome. I would we had aught to offer you; but the times go hard with us, and you have chosen an untoward moment for your visit. The men of this city have risen up against us, and will do nothing for our support; and we are even now preparing to go forth and seek new shelter; for we fear lest if we tarry here, we perish for very want."

The tall form of the strange friar assumed an air of yet greater majesty as he heard these words; he pushed back the cowl, and displayed a countenance which struck awe into all who beheld it. The shaven crown was encircled by a single ring of coal-black hair; the brow was lofty; and the eyes, deep-sunk in their recesses, sent forth a gleam of fire, as he gazed on the guardian with a look that seemed to penetrate into his heart. His face, too, was pale, and had that look of suffering which

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might be worn by one who ever bore about him some secret pain; and as he spoke, his lips assumed for a moment a curl almost of contempt.

"O faithless and perverse generation!" he said at length, "are these the soldiers of their Lord, the sons of him who wore the wounds of the crucified, the children of the saints, and the followers of martyrs? Two days of want have come upon you, and where is your confidence? You trusted and prayed when God gave you abundance, and were ready with pious speeches and brave words when the alms-boxes came home full; and now, after two days of trial, your faith and courage have all fled away, and you are ready to believe that God's word, which He promised to your fathers, is about to fail! Therefore do you err grievously, inasmuch as you do wrong to the truth and fidelity of the Most High."

And as he spoke, an expression of new pain shot across his face.

"Saw you that?" whispered one of the younger brothers to his nearest neighbour; "he is surely a saintly soul, whom it grieveth even to speak of sin; but he is about to speak again. I wot well the secrets of our souls are manifest to him."

"Yea, they are manifest," said brother Obligatus, turning the lustre of his sparkling eyes full on the last speaker. "And thou who so lately didst give thy vows to God, standest now before Him half resolved to break thy faith, and dally with the gifts and lands of worldlings, lest perchance thou shouldst suffer too hard an abstinence for thy delicate frame. O fools and slow of heart, did ye not know that sooner than one word of His should fail, the angels themselves would bring you food? nay, the very demons would be forced to serve you, and minister to your needs."

"My father," said the guardian, with a low reverence, "you are all unknown to us, yet we see well that you speak by the Spirit of God. We cannot resist or gainsay your words, for they have a strange power

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with them; and, for my part, I feel that, come what may, I will now die a thousand deaths ere I abandon this house, or infringe one letter of the rule of Francis."

"Nor I, nor I!" burst from the lips of the brothers. "You have conquered, father, and are to us even as an angel of God; do with us as you will, for we know verily that He speaks by your mouth."

What a moment for the tempter! for it was even he; he saw how the momentary weakness of the poor friars had but been the occasion of their gaining a new title to the favour of heaven, by their quick penitence at the first word of exhortation. Gladly would he have retired from a scene that only tortured him; but brother Obligatus had no will of his own; there was a stronger power than his compelling him to say words which were not his, and which were an agony for him to utter. So covering his face for a moment with his hand (the brethren thought it was to hide the emotion which their words produced), he continued:

"My brethren, God has been angry; but He will be appeased by your prayers and humiliation. As to me, the task is mine now to provide in His name for all your wants."

"Good father," said the guardian, "if you purpose seeking alms, know that there is none to give them in this town."

"Fear nothing," replied Father Obligatus; "but get you to the choir, and cause the gates to be opened, for I will not return empty-handed."

And now the unwilling preacher found himself compelled to go through street after street, stirring up the cold hearts of all he met by his wonderful eloquence. Men gathered after him, and hung upon his words; they felt that nothing could resist the force and magic of his appeals for charity, and all for the love of God. The love of God! words which came forth with so sad and sweet a music from his lips, while his very heart was torn with their utterance. And oh, as he felt forced on to speak to them of the vanity of riches, and the

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danger of that covetousness which takes the heart from God, and binds it like a galley-slave to Satan,—and of the pride and self-love that likens them to devils, and defaces in them the image of the Most High, what a bitter humbling thing it was! and how he writhed and struggled against the hand that forced him on, whilst men thought it all but the energy of one who laboured for fit words in which to utter his idea, and the zeal for the salvation of souls which so kindled the words of the impassioned speaker! The alms poured in from all sides, and he was forced to take it, and to carry the heavy bag on his own shoulders, into which every hand was now eager to put something, and so bring his load back to the monastery.

This went on day after day; the fame of the wonderful preacher extended even beyond the walls of the city, and strangers crowded to see him from all parts; and when they had once heard him, they felt a new spirit revive in their hearts; it was a wonderful change. And what was worst of all was to have to wear that meek, lowly look of the poor Capuchin, and to rattle his little box, and cry, "Charity, my masters, charity, for the dear love of God!" and as they dropped their coins into it, to bow low, and promise prayers for his good benefactors, and to ask God to bless them and reward their liberality. At a week's end the alms had increased to so enormous an amount that it was judged fitting the surplus should be appropriated in some way, and the universal cry of the citizens was for a new monastery; it seemed as though they could never now be weary of Capuchin friars; and brother Obligatus was forced to go about seeking for labourers and masons, urging them on, so that they worked with extraordinary rapidity, they hardly knew how; for the walls seemed to grow under their hands with supernatural speed whenever the brown frock of that wonderful friar was seen standing near the spot. Meanwhile, the friars themselves were not a little perplexed to guess who their strange helper could really be. Some said it was

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Francis come back to earth to help his children; but those even who most admired Br. Obligatus looked doubtfully on this suggestion; for with all his holy, pious words, they felt as though there was a different air and carriage about him from that of the meek and lowly founder of the Friars Minor. The father-guardian kept a prudent silence; men said he had received a divine revelation as to the truth; and so indeed he had, but he did not allow any word of it to escape his lips. Now, on a certain day it chanced that, as he walked to and fro within the convent-garden, he met Obligatus coming from the new building; and though usually he did not seek his company, yet this time he could scarce avoid addressing him. He was the first to speak: "Brother," he said, "how goes on the convent? is it well advanced?" "It is finished," said Obligatus, concealing his face as he spoke; for he had become uneasy in the guardian's presence, and did not much relish the glance of his clear grey eye. "How? finished! why, it was begun but five months since!" "And they have been five years to me," said the demon, bitterly; "nevertheless, had I been so permitted, I could have done it in five days." "God does not work miracles without necessity," answered the guardian coldly, for he thought it well not to seem to know more than others. But Obligatus saw that he was discovered; and not caring to dissemble any longer, he turned fiercely towards his companion, saying, with an impatient gesture, "God! always God; *I* could have done it, I say. I am powerful enough for that." "I know you," said the guardian, "and I know that God permits your presence here; I know, too, that with all your boasted power, you are less strong than our Father Francis." "*He* powerful!" said Obligatus; "yes, when he prays; a poor sort of power: mine at least is mine own." "And yet you have failed; the friars have returned to their first faith; the citizens are more devout and liberal than before; there remains but one task laid on you by heaven to be accomplished, and all your malice

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will be baffled. Go, then, and convert the merchant Louis from his gold; for it seems to me that there yet lies in store for you a great humiliation."

In fact, the conversion of Louis was the hardest of all the tasks imposed on Obligatus. He laboured at it night and day, but always without success. The merchant could not refuse to see him, for the friar Obligatus was a great man in the town, the popular favourite, and the confident of the governor and the city council. Moreover, there was that in his manner which no one dared openly to affront; so Louis endured his presence and his exhortations; but he listened to them unmoved, and his heart grew every day harder and harder. At length he fell sick; the physicians declared him in danger of death; his wife hung over his bed, and implored him now at length to think of his soul; but still he babbled of his money and his trade, and would not hear of priest or prayer, and turned away his head when they showed him the crucifix: it was a hopeless case. "Oh, would to God," said the weeping Octavia, "that the holy friar Obligatus were but here! Run for him, good Beppo," she added, turning to an attendant, "and tell him that Master Louis is growing worse; and pray him not to delay, for there is sore need of his presence." "I am here, my daughter," said the deep voice of the friar in her ear; "Master Louis is indeed in need of prayer and holy words, for his hour is come at last." Then turning to the sick man, his whole form seemed to dilate, as he burst forth in one of those strains of thrilling eloquence which had so often fascinated the ears of the people during the last five months. He spoke of the soul and of its loss; its death that never dies, and the anguish of that remorse that comes too late, and never goes away. He spoke of the unquenchable fire, and the hair of the hearers bristled on their heads. "That man must surely have seen the things whereof he speaks," they whispered; "speak he of heaven or of hell, it is all one; it is as though he gazed on them with his very eyes." Yes; and he spoke of heaven—

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not enjoyed, not possessed—but of the eternal regret of one that had been created to enjoy it and to possess it, and had once half tasted of its happiness, and then had lost it, and lost it through his own fault. Oh, the wild weeping, and mourning, and gnashing of teeth, and the cry of long despair of that loss! How, as he spoke, the doleful sounds of the eternal prison seemed to rise round the bed of the dying man! it was the loss of God whereof he spoke, of God the supreme beauty, the supreme truth; of God the end of all desires and all love (and the plaintive echoes of his voice seemed full of an unspeakable regret), all lost—lost—lost!

"My master is a bold man," muttered Beppo to another attendant; "I would not for all his money-chests that such words as those should be spoken over my dying bed." But scarcely had Louis heard them, even as Obligatus had uttered the last syllables, the death-rattle was in his throat; and as that last word "lost" came forth from the lips of the speaker, he gave one convulsive motion of the hands, and fell back upon his pillow. Obligatus bent eagerly over him; he was quite dead. "Mine!" cried the demon with a tone of triumph, "mine own at length. Michael, thou art baffled now!"

"Alas! the good friar is beside himself," said the bystanders. "Holy father, you have indeed done your utmost with the unhappy man; we pray you take some rest; your much speaking has overwrought your strength." But as they spoke they perceived that the friar was wrestling as with some strong power, which forced him against his will. Broken sentences burst from his lips: "I cannot—nay, I will not—he is mine, I say." Then turning to those who filled the room, "Follow me to the Great Piazza," he said; "I cannot resist that voice." And so saying he rushed from the room, and into the street; with hurried step traversed the piazza, till he came to the spot where he had been wont to address the multitudes who flocked to hear him. The news of what had happened soon spread through the place. "The merchant Louis has died impenitent,

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and demons have carried off his soul," said they one to another; "doubtless, Father Obligatus hath witnessed the same, and hath much on his mind to speak to us; it will be a rare discourse." And so curiosity, the hope of hearing, the well-known eloquence of the friar on so terrible and stirring a subject, soon gathered a vast crowd that filled the piazza from end to end.

Obligatus stood up before them. What kind of words they were he spoke we dare not attempt to chronicle; but his audience at least had never heard the like. How many a sinner was roused from his dream of luxury and ease by those words, that seemed as though they opened hell beneath his feet; how many a cold, indifferent heart now felt for the first moment what it was to have, and to lose, a soul. Yes, Louis had indeed become the victim of his own avarice and impiety; but the loss of that one soul was the conversion of thousands. And many a man had afterwards reason to thank God for having witnessed the tragedy of that day, which first brought him to penitence, and saved him from a like fate.

The last sermon of the demon-friar was ended. He knew the souls it had lost him; and his moment of triumph was over. Tearing off his friar's habit, and casting it from him, he cried, "Francis! the truce between us is at an end. I have done thy work, and thou hast conquered." Then turning to the astonished multitude, "Go to the father-guardian of the Capuchins," he said, "and to-morrow he will declare to you what these things mean; but never more will ye behold the Friar Obligatus." As he spoke, he disappeared, men scarcely knew how; nor was he ever seen again. The strangeness of his last words, and the casting away of the holy habit, perplexed them sorely, till the truth was declared, and then a yet more solemn awe fell upon their souls; nor has the tradition of this event ever been lost; but far and wide, through many a city of Italy, and in other lands, may still be found, in broken fragments, the legend of the Demon-preacher.

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XXVI.

THE LEGEND OF THE HERMIT NICHOLAS.

At the close of the year 1481, on the eve of St. Thomas, the deputies of the free Confederation of High Germany met in full assembly at Stantz, in the canton of Unterwald. They were, for the most part, men who, by their bravery and skill in battle, no less than by their wisdom and prudence in time of peace, had acquired great consideration among their countrymen; and they had assembled on this occasion to deliberate upon matters of the gravest import to the common welfare.

At this period the cities and states of the Swiss Confederation were at the height of their prosperity; the fruit of three memorable victories over the forces of the Duke of Burgundy.

Six years had not elapsed since the first of these—that of Granson. In this famous engagement, the Confederates had humbled the haughty arrogance of Charles the Bold: his fine army, three times stronger than their own, had been cut in pieces; and this hitherto unconquered hero, the master of the richest provinces on this side the Alps—the two Burgundies, Gueldres, and almost all Belgium,—this warrior, before whom France trembled, and whom Lorraine had been unable to resist, fled from the field of battle with only six companions. Four hundred pieces of artillery, six hundred banners, his ducal hat, his sword of state, the three large diamonds, celebrated through Europe, which were destined at a subsequent period to adorn the crowns of mighty potentates;—in a word, a camp which was unequalled in riches and magnificence throughout Christendom, and could only be compared to the camps of the Turks, fell into the hands of poor mountaineers, who, with the help of God, had defended their liberty against the cupidity and pride of a foreign foe.

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The second battle took place on the plains of Morat. Charles of Burgundy was supported by Savoy, Milan, and Italy. The Swiss had for auxiliaries, Austria, the cities of Alsace, and Réné, Duke of Lorraine. The Confederates fought with unabated heroism, and all the might of Burgundy failed to overpower them. His army was again routed with enormous loss, and Charles fled a second time, having with him only thirty men. The Confederates, after the battle, fell on their knees in thanksgiving for the success of their arms; the trumpets poured forth a joyous blast; messengers, decorated with green branches, ran in all haste through the towns and villages, and the bells rang out exulting peals; sounds of triumph echoed from the depths of the valley to the solitary chalêt at the foot of those eternal glaciers where dwell the chamois and the vulture.

The third of these great battles was fought by the Swiss near Nancy. The Burgundian, in his despair, had collected all that remained of his forces, and having on this occasion to contend with troops superior to his own, he displayed a valour worthy of his name and ancestors. But all his efforts were in vain; and Charles, the last of his house on the throne of Burgundy, was once more totally defeated.

The reputation of the Swiss became so great in consequence of these successes, that the most powerful princes of Europe sent ambassadors to their assemblies, and sought their alliance. At the negotiations held at Zurich, in 1478, for concluding peace with Burgundy, were to be seen envoys from the Emperor of Germany, the King of France, the Archduke of Austria, and counts and lords from far and near. The Swiss had no longer a single enemy to fear.

But notwithstanding these brilliant victories, these distinguished marks of respect, and their increasing internal prosperity, the deputies of the Confederates assembled at Stantz in 1481 did not wear so serene an aspect as might have been expected. They cast at one another dark and distrustful glances; and none would

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have conjectured that these were the same men who, a little before, had fought so loyally one for the other, and who had owed the success of their arms to their unbroken unity. But the Swiss of that age were men; and the men of that day were little different from those of the present; the very prosperity which God had granted them became their misfortune. Their coffers were full of gold; but the old manner of life, in which their fathers found strength and contentment, had become distasteful to them. The immense booty taken from the Burgundians, and the payments made on various accounts by France, had occasioned large sums of money to circulate among the people; and the Swiss, overcome by the seductions of gold, had lost something of their pure and disinterested love for their country. The heart of more than one old Confederate must have bled to see the ancient sentiments of loyalty and the fear of God so visibly declining among the people; and their former simplicity and purity of manners giving place insensibly to corruption and disorder. The authorities sought zealously to arrest the progress of evil. But laws could not long preserve their vigour, when vice poisoned the soul of the community. The arrogance of youth no longer yielded the respect due to age; and this deterioration of manners threatened to bring about the ruin of the country.

The minds of the Confederates had been already so warped by jealousy and selfishness, that the members of the assembly of Stantz could come to no mutual understanding, and were unceasingly embittered against each other. There were two parties in the assembly at variance with each other; that of the towns, and that of the country. The peasants of Uri, of Schwytz, and Unterwalden, cantons which gave birth to the Swiss League, who pastured their flocks in safety in high valleys, inaccessible to the enemy, desired peace beyond every thing; and distrusted the ambition and cupidity of the citizens, who would draw them needlessly into interminable wars. They sought to maintain the Swiss

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Confederation within its ancient limits, and were not disposed to strengthen the opposite party by the admission of new towns. On the contrary, the towns of Lucerne, of Berne, and of Zurich exerted themselves to obtain admittance into the Confederation for Soleure and Fribourg; because they themselves lay exposed to the attacks of the enemy, Switzerland not having as yet any natural frontier; and these towns had fought faithfully for Switzerland in the wars against Charles, and the Confederates in the hour of danger had promised to admit them into the league.

To this source of discord was added the envy excited by the division of the Burgundian booty and the foreign subsidies. It was in vain that the cantons of Glarus and Zug sought to interpose their mediation, and that meetings were held in various places to reconcile differences. And now the Confederates were assembled for consultation for the last time at Stantz. The animosity of party, however, was so great, that after three sessions of angry debates, the members rose with agitated countenances, and separated without taking leave of one another, to meet again, perhaps, only in the conflict of civil war. That which neither the power of Austria, nor the audacious might of Charles of Burgundy, had ever been able to accomplish, the Swiss were themselves in danger of bringing about by their internal dissensions; and the liberty and happiness of their country stood in the most imminent peril.

These considerations filled all good citizens with sorrow and alarm; and, amongst others, a curé of Stantz. named Henri Im Grand, a Lucernois, and a man full of piety and zeal for the good of his country. As he reflected on the danger which threatened her, his thoughts turned to the holy hermit, Brother Nicholas, of Kauft. "This man," said he to himself, "lives in the presence of God; a divine blessing is certainly with him; all honour him as a saint; he is, perhaps, the only man whose voice will command attention from these adverse parties." The man of God rose up, took his staff, and ascending

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the valley of Enstmosn, crossed the Kernwald to the peaceful solitude where dwelt the hermit-saint.

Let us leave the good curé to accomplish his journey with the help of God; he has almost four leagues to travel, and the Swiss leagues are a good measure; and while we meantime inquire who is this Brother Nicholas, and in what manner a poor hermit in his solitude has acquired such influence and authority.

The man who at this epoch, not only in the mountains of Switzerland, but even through Christendom, was known and venerated under the name of Nicholas de Flue, was born in the higher valley of Unterwald sixty-four years previously (in 1417), at the time the bishops of the Catholic Church sat in the Council of Constance. The cottage of his parents was situated in a peaceful and woody country, near the high mountains of Sachslen. Not far distant is the beautiful lake of the four cantons, surrounded by smiling meadows, and enamelled with odoriferous flowers; its waters are clear as a mirror; all manner of fish may be seen sporting in its depths, and every variety of aquatic plants floating on its surface. From the crystal basin which laves their foot, the mountains rise high into the azure regions of the air, and upon their declivity are the pretty huts of the shepherds sheltered by dark forests; while grazing flocks give life to the landscape: the lofty summits of these mountains are covered with eternal snows, and penetrate the clouds, towering far above all surrounding objects. Upon the shores of the lake, in the valleys, and on the hills, are charming villages, beautiful churches, and modest chapels. Crosses in many parts mark the spots where a good action has been performed, or a crime committed; or where the wild and frightful aspect of nature makes the heart shudder from the consciousness of guilt, and cast itself helplessly on God. Four cantons, Uri, Schwytz, Lucerne, and Unterwalden, the native country of Brother Nicholas, surround this beautiful lake; the whole forming a magnificent pano-

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rama of mountains, elevating the soul by its grandeur and variety. It was here that Nicholas de Flue was born; in one of these solitary valleys, where the silence is broken only by the bell of the herd, the wild song of the birds of the forest, and the murmur of Alpine torrents. He was descended from a race of good and pious shepherds, in whom were transmitted from father to son the ancient virtues of the Swiss, and who enjoyed during successive centuries the esteem of their fellow-countrymen. His parents had an honest competence; and, after the example of their fathers, they adhered stedfastly to the true and ancient faith, respected the laws of their country, and brought up their children in piety and virtue. They tended their flocks with unwearied care; and, after a life of tranquillity, fell asleep in God, full of confidence; for they had walked before Him, like the patriarchs, to the borders of Jordan. The young Nicholas grew up beneath their salutary tutelage, and manifested always an obedient spirit and a love of virtue; gentle and pious even from the days of his childhood. It was often remarked by those around him, that after the hard labour of a whole day in the fields, when he returned home in the evening, he would disappear by stealth to pray in some secret place. His spirit began thus early to mortify the body, in order to give itself without distraction to elevated contemplation. When some one, out of kindness, warned him not to ruin his health in his youth by such severe fasts as he was accustomed to observe, he replied, with sweetness, that such was the will of God concerning him. Notwithstanding his fervent and austere devotion, his demeanour was cheerful and affable; and he discharged with fidelity all the duties which his condition of life imposed upon him. He entered upon manhood endowed with a noble firmness of soul, a penetrating intelligence, and great purity of heart. In his twenty-third year he took arms, at the call of the magistrates, in the campaign against Zurich; and again, fourteen years later, at the time of the occupation of Thurgovia,

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when he commanded, as captain, a company of 100 men, and manifested such bravery, that his country decreed him a gold medal as a recompense. A yet more honourable circumstance in the same expedition was the saving of the monastery of the valley of St. Catherine, near Diessenhofen, which to this day reveres him as its deliverer. It was owing to his exhortations that the Swiss relinquished their design of setting fire to the abbey, in order to expel the enemy, who abandoned it soon after of their own accord. In battle he carried his sword in one hand, his chaplet in the other: he showed himself at once a fearless soldier and a merciful Christian, protecting the widow and the orphan, and not permitting the conquerors to perpetrate acts of violence against the vanquished.

Arrived at manhood, Nicholas married, in obedience to the wishes of his parents; choosing from among the maidens of the canton a virtuous young girl, named Dorothy Wysyling. They had ten children, five sons and five daughters, from whom sprang a numerous and honourable posterity, which never lost the remembrance of its ancestors.

Nicholas was himself unanimously elected governor and judge of Obwalden. His conduct in this important post may be gathered from what the curé, Henri Im Grand, his director and friend, revealed after his death. Nicholas had one day said to him on this subject, "I have received from God the gift of an upright spirit. I have been often consulted in the affairs of my country; I have also pronounced many judgments; but, through Divine grace, I do not remember to have acted against my conscience in any thing: I have never regarded persons, nor have I ever departed from the ways of justice." The high dignity of Landamman was decreed him by the General Assembly several times; but he feared the great responsibility; and, without doubt, he felt also that God had reserved him for some other and greater thing.

Nicholas had thus lived fifty years for the good

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of his country and family, and esteemed by all, when, in the year 1467, he felt himself moved by an ardent desire of being more intimately united with God, in a life of entire separation from the world. His eldest son, Jean de Flue, thus speaks of him: "My father always retired to rest at the same time as his children and servants; but every night I saw him rise again, and heard him praying in his chamber until morning. Many times, also, he would repair in the silence of the night to the old church of St. Nicholas, or to other holy places. These hours of solitude were to him the happiest moments of his life; and the interior impulse became even more powerful to consecrate the remainder of his life to the devout contemplation of eternal truths. God also favoured him frequently with miraculous intimations of His divine will. On one occasion, when he went to visit his flock at a place called Bergnatt, according to his wont, he knelt upon the grass, and began to pray, when God vouchsafed him a consoling vision. He beheld a fragrant lily, white as snow, come out of his mouth, and rise towards heaven. Whilst he regaled himself with the perfume and beauty of the flower, his flock came gambolling towards him, and amongst them a noble horse. As he turned to look, the lily inclined itself towards the horse, which advanced and drew it from his mouth; by which Nicholas was made to understand that the treasure to which he should aspire was in heaven; and if his heart was not wholly detached from the things of earth, he would forfeit the possession of the celestial joys reserved for him."

Another time, while engaged in the ordinary business of his house, he saw three men approach him, of venerable aspect, one of whom addressed him thus:

"Tell us, Nicholas, will you put body and soul into our power?"

"I give myself to none," replied he, "but the Almighty God, whom I have long desired to serve with my soul and body."

At these words the strangers turned with a smile

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one towards the other, and the first answered: "Because thou hast given thyself wholly to God, and art bound to Him for ever, I promise that in the 70th year of thine age thou shalt be delivered from all the troubles of this world. Remain, then, constant in thy resolution, and thou shalt carry in heaven a victorious banner in the midst of the armies of God, if thou hast borne with patience the cross that we leave thee."

Upon this the three men disappeared. These and similar apparitions confirmed him in his resolution of separating from the world. At length he disclosed to his wife the desire of his soul, and entreated her, for the love of God, to give him permission to fulfil the vocation which God had indicated to him. She consented with calm resignation, and Nicholas began at once to arrange the affairs of his house, assigning to each of his children his part of the inheritance. He then assembled all his household,—his old father, 70 years of age, his wife, his children, and his friends: he appeared before them barefoot and bareheaded, clothed in the long robe of a pilgrim, with a staff and chaplet in his hand; he thanked them for all the kindness they had shown him, exhorted them for the last time to fear God before all things; then he gave them his blessing and departed. That this separation was a trial to him, was evidenced by his frequent expressions of thankfulness to God that He had strengthened him to overcome for His service the love he bore to his wife and children.

Nicholas set out for the place whither God should see good to lead him with a tranquil heart: he would not remain in his own neighbourhood, lest he should become a subject of scandal, and be regarded as an impostor assuming an appearance of sanctity; at the same time he dreaded ostentation, and endeavoured to conceal his great piety as much as possible from the eyes of men. Crossing the fertile valleys and the verdant mountains of his country, he arrived at the limits of the Confederation. When not far from Aaran, upon the Hanenstein, which then separated Burgundy from

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Switzerland, at a spot whence he could see beyond the frontiers the little town of Liechtstall, he had a remarkable vision. The town, with its houses and towers, appeared to him enveloped in flames. Terrified with this spectacle, he entered into conversation with a peasant whom he found in a neighbouring farm-house; and after some preliminary discourse, he made known to him his purpose, begging him to point out a solitary spot where he might be able to carry it into effect. This man counselled him to remain in his own country; because, as the Confederates were not always well received in other parts, he might be unfavourably regarded, and his retreat be disturbed; besides, there were deserts enough in Switzerland where he might serve God in peace. Brother Nicholas thanked his host for this good counsel, and retook the same evening the road to his native place. He passed the night in a field in the open air, reflecting on the end of his pilgrimage, and praying God to enlighten him. Soon he fell asleep, but suddenly beheld himself surrounded with a bright light, and it seemed to him as though a cord drew him towards his own country. This supernatural light penetrated his whole interior, and caused him, as he afterwards declared, a suffering as from the sharp incisions of a knife. The following morning he rose, and went the same day without stopping as far as Melchthal, his native place: he repaired to one of his pastures called the Kluster; there he made a little hut of branches and leaves under a strong larch, in the midst of thorny bushes, and remained without discovery till the eighth day, neither eating nor drinking, but absorbed in prayer and meditation on divine things. Some hunters in pursuit of game in the forest first became aware of his retreat, and spoke of him to his brother Pierre de Flue, who came to entreat him not to suffer himself to die with hunger in so wild a solitude. Brother Nicholas begged him to be without uneasiness on his account, since he had experienced no evil result up to that time. Nevertheless, that he might not seem to tempt God, he

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sent secretly for the curé of Kerns, a venerable priest, named Oswald Isner, and acquainted him with the whole case. This good man gave the following testimony after the hermit's death, as may be read in the parish record of the year 1488:

"When Br. Nicholas had passed eleven days without food, he sent for me, and asked me whether he should take some nourishment or continue his trial, as he had always desired to be able to live without eating, in order to be more effectually separated from created things. When I saw and comprehended that this could come only from the source of divine love, I counselled Br. Nicholas to persevere as long as he found himself able; and from this time to the day of his death, a period of more than twenty years, he continued to dispense with bodily food. As the pious brother was more familiar with me than with any other person, I sought earnestly to learn from him how his strength was sustained; and one day he told me in great secrecy, that when he assisted at Mass, and the priest communicated, he received a strength which enabled him to refrain from all other nourishment."

When the fame of this miraculous life spread abroad, people flocked from all parts to see a man whom God had so distinguished, and to convince themselves of its reality by personal observation. It may well be imagined that no woodsman in the canton went to fell a tree, no shepherd to visit his pastures, without seeking an interview with this wonderful inhabitant of the solitude. His quiet life was in consequence so much disturbed, that he determined to seek a more isolated spot. After traversing several of the wildest valleys with this intention, he beheld above a gloomy gorge, down which the Melch precipitates itself with deafening roar, a brilliant light descending from heaven. Obedient to this indication of the will of God, he built there a little hut, surrounded with thick underwood, situated only a quarter of a league from his former house. But the same year, his neighbours, the inhabitants of Obwalden,

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edified by his holy life, and knowing him to be neither an impostor nor a vain enthusiast, built him a chapel with a small cell attached, and presented it to him as a mark of their affection. Brother Nicholas entered this new dwelling, and continued there to serve God in the same supernatural life. Meanwhile the renown of his extraordinary mode of existence extended far and wide: many were unwilling to believe that a man could thus live miraculously by the sole grace of the Almighty, whilst others glorified God on his behalf.

It was only on Sundays and festival days that he left his cell, and assisted with the rest of the parishioners at divine service in the church of Sachslen. Once a year he repaired to Lucerne for the great procession, and to visit the celebrated places of pilgrimage, as well as those to which the Church had granted indulgences. When the journey became too fatiguing on account of his advanced age, and the gifts of pious persons enabled him to procure the services of a priest, he heard Mass daily in his own chapel, and confessed and received the Holy Communion frequently. He consecrated to the service of God all the hours from midnight to midday, at which time he prayed and meditated, especially on the passion of Jesus Christ our Saviour, who, as he said, communicated to him in the exercise a miraculous strength, a supernatural food.

During the remainder of the day, from midday to the evening, he received those who visited him; or, when the weather was fine, he would traverse the mountains praying, or visit his friend Brother Ulrich, and converse with him on divine things. Ulrich was a German gentleman originally from Bavaria, who, after many remarkable adventures, had quitted the world to establish himself near Nicholas in this solitude. Lodged in the hollow of a rock, he led a life similar to his, save only that he could not dispense with food, which the pious country-people provided for him. In the evening Brother Nicholas resumed his prayers; then he went to take a short repose upon his couch, which con-

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sisted only of two planks, with a piece of wood or a stone for a pillow.

The holy and miraculous life of a man so entirely separated from the world, inspired all Christians, without distinction of rank, with such confidence in the power of his prayers, and in the wisdom of his counsels, that in the Swiss cantons and elsewhere, whoever was in trouble or anxiety, or desired sound advice in public or private affairs, went to seek Brother Nicholas in his asylum, to receive from him direction and consolation, and to recommend himself to his prayers. Generals and statesmen, bishops and scholars, did not think it beneath their dignity to visit, in these wild defiles, this poor hermit, who could neither read nor write; and they went away astonished at the simple wisdom, the clear and profound insight into things divine and human which he manifested. Those who from far and near repaired in pilgrimage to Einsiedeln, to invoke the holy Mother of God, did not think they could return in peace to their firesides, if they had not visited and conversed with Brother Nicholas.

It need not, then, excite astonishment that the curé Henri Im Grand should have placed his hope in Brother Nicholas. Let us now see how the zealous priest succeeded in his undertaking.

Night was already far advanced when the curé Henri arrived before the hermitage. The cell where the pious brother had lived for so many years was so low that he touched the ceiling with his head: it was not three feet in length, and only half that width; to the right and left were little windows the size of a man's hand, and a door and window opened to the chapel. No other furniture was to be seen but the bed, with its old gray coverlet, on which the hermit reposed.

The good curé explained to the brother the great danger in which the country was involved: he informed him how deplorable had been the issue of the assembly, and implored him in the name of God to come and succour

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his poor country in the present emergency. Brother Nicholas replied with his usual calm gravity: "Return," said he, "to Stantz; tell the envoys of the Confederation that Brother Nicholas has something to propose to them, and that he will repair to them speedily."

The curé, full of hope, resumed his journey with all possible speed; he hastened to the inns where the deputies were preparing for departure, and conjured them, with tears in his eyes, in the name of God and of Brother Nicholas, to be again reconciled, and to listen for the last time to the counsels and proposition of the pious hermit. They consented; and some hours after, the brother appeared in the midst of the assembly.

Notwithstanding his great age, Nicholas had performed this long and difficult journey without resting; his fine majestic figure, which time had scarcely bent, was to be seen advancing across the market-place of Stantz to the town-hall. He wore, according to custom, his simple dark-coloured dress, which descended to his feet; he carried his chaplet in one hand, and grasped his staff with the other; he was, as usual, barefoot and bareheaded; and his long hair, a little touched by the snows of age, fell upon his shoulders. When the holy man entered the hall before all the Confederates, and they beheld the peace which irradiated his countenance, and the heavenly light which shone from his eyes, a profound veneration for the humble servant of God penetrated the whole assembly, and they responded to his friendly salutation by rising spontaneously and bowing low before him. After a few moments, silence was broken by the fine and sonorous voice of the hermit, who addressed them thus:

"Dear lords, faithful Confederates, I salute you in the name of God, our good Father and Master, who has sent me here, that I may exhort you touching your dissensions, which are likely to bring about the ruin of our beloved country. I am a poor unlearned man; but I will give you counsel in all the sincerity of my heart, and will speak to you as God inspires me. Would

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that my words may bring you to unity and peace! O dear Confederates! discuss your affairs in a spirit of friendship and kindness; for one good leads to another. Believe me that it is to a stedfast union that you and your fathers owe your prosperity. And since, in recompense of this concord, God has vouchsafed you such noble victories, would you, through jealousy and avarice, separate to your mutual destruction? Keep yourselves carefully from all dissension, from all distrust; in God we ought always to find peace: God, who is peace itself, is not subject to any change; but discord is the parent of change, and leads to destruction. For this cause I conjure you, dear Confederates of the country, receive into your alliance the two good towns of Fribourg and Soleure; they have given you faithful succour in danger, they have suffered with you good and bad fortune, and they have lost much in your cause. I will not only exhort and counsel you, I will also entreat you earnestly, because I know that it is the will of God. A time will come when you will have great need of His assistance and support. And you, Confederates of the cities! renounce these rights of security which you have established with these two cities; for they are a source of discord. Do not extend too far the circle of the Confederation, that you may the better maintain peace and unity, and enjoy in repose the liberty so dearly purchased. Do not meddle with too many external affairs, nor ally yourselves with foreign powers. O dear Confederates! accept neither presents nor subsidies of money, that you may not appear to have sold your country for gold, that jealousy and selfishness may not germinate amongst you and poison your hearts. Preserve in all your relations your natural justice; divide the booty according to the service rendered, the conquered lands according to the localities. Do not be drawn into unjust wars by the hope of pillage; live in peace and in good understanding with your neighbours; if they attack you, defend your country valiantly, and fight like staunch men. Practise

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justice amongst yourselves, and love one another as Christian allies. May God protect you, and be with you for all eternity!"

Thus spoke Nicholas de Flue; and God gave His grace to the words of the holy anchorite, says the worthy chronicler Ischudi; so that in one hour all difficulties were smoothed away, and base passions were silent through shame before the severe counsel of a man who appeared before this assembly with his hands raised towards heaven, even as a prophet sent from God.

The Confederates, in accordance with Nicholas's advice, received into their league the towns of Fribourg and Soleure; the ancient treaties of alliance were confirmed, and further consolidated by being established on the basis of new laws unanimously enacted. The pacification of all the Swiss cantons, the maintenance of public order, and of the authority of the magistrates against the disturbers of the peace, the division of booty according to the rule given by Nicholas,—such were the points upon which the Confederates, who had so long contended with so much animosity, came this same day to an entire agreement.

The brother returned the same evening to his peaceful hermitage. At Stantz the bells were rung, and sounds of rejoicing floated across the lakes and through the valleys to all the villages and towns of Switzerland, from the snowy heights of St. Gothard to the smiling plains of Thurgovia. There was as much joy and gladness every where as after the victories of Granson and Morat, and with as just cause: for there the Confederates had delivered their country from foreign enemies; here they saved it from their own passions. Their true deliverer, who had obtained for them this victory over themselves, was the poor Brother Nicholas, and as such he was every where recognised and extolled.

The towns and countries of the Confederation, and above all Soleure and Fribourg, satisfied with the happy termination of their dissensions, testified their gratitude

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to the brother by sending him letters of thanks and precious gifts. He accepted the latter only when they were destined to adorn the chapel, for he wished that they should honour God alone as the author of all good. In accordance with this desire, the inhabitants of Soleure sent him twenty gold florins to found a perpetual mass. Fribourg did the same. Berne sent a courier with a letter of thanksgiving and a handsome present. The answer which the brother returned, through the medium of his son John, exists to this day in the archives of Soleure, to which city it was presented by Berne. Soleure also testified her gratitude to the curé Henri Im Grand, who had brought the brother to Stantz. From this time the general veneration for, and confidence in, Brother Nicholas increased continually.

Nicholas lived six years longer in his peaceful retreat, rich in benedictions. At length the time arrived when God would call His faithful servant from the miseries of the world to eternal joys in His unchangeable presence.

The whole life of the saint had been an unceasing combat with his earthly nature,—a combat which was to continue to his latest hour, in order that he might be adorned in heaven with crowns of patience and meekness, virtues which had enabled him to support every trial on earth. Before his death God sent him a sharp sickness, in which indescribable pains penetrated to the very marrow of his bones. In this condition of suffering he turned from side to side, writhing upon his couch like a worm trodden under foot. These frightful pains lasted eight days, during which his body was as it were annihilated: he bore them with perfect resignation, and continued to exhort those who surrounded his bed of death so to conduct themselves in this life that they might leave it with a peaceful conscience. "Death," said he, "is terrible; but it is still more terrible to fall into the hands of the living God." When his pains were a little relieved, and the moment of death drew near, Nicholas desired with all the ardour

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of devotion to receive the sacred Body of the Saviour, and to be strengthened by the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. Near the dying man stood his faithful companion Brother Ulrich, his old friend Henri Im Grand, and the pious anchorite Cecil, who after his death led for seventy years the same solitary life in a neighbouring cell; his faithful wife and children also gathered round him. In their presence he received the holy Sacraments with tokens of deep humility; then he thanked God anew for all the benefits He had dispensed to him, prostrated himself, and died the death of the just.

This event took place on the first day of the spring of the year 1487, the feast of St. Benedict, the same on which seventy years previous he was born.

The lily had been the favourite symbol of this pure calm soul; the lily in flower, resplendent with a divine glory, was Brother Nicholas himself, the humble servant of God, whose name it is said even St. Charles Borromeo never pronounced but with uncovered head.

NOTE.

The magistrates of the canton, desiring to verify the fact of the monastic life of Blessed Nicholas, sent officers, who, for the space of a month, occupied day and night all the avenues of his retreat, in order that no person might bring provisions. Thomas, Suffragan Bishop of Constance, subjected the brother to a similar test when he consecrated the chapel; and after him, Bishop Otho visited the hermit. The Archduke Sigismond of Austria sent, for the same purpose, his physician, the learned and skilful Binkard de Horneck, in order that he might attentively observe Nicholas during several days and nights. Frederic III., Emperor of Germany, also appointed delegates to examine him; but all these expedients served only to confirm the truth. Those who visited him were so struck with the piety and humility of the servant of God, that all their doubts vanished, and they left him penetrated with the most profound respect. When asked how he could exist without food, his simple reply was, "God knows."

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XXVII.

THE MARTYR OF RŒUX.

"At the time when the children of Clovis reigned in Gaul," says an old chronicle, "there was in Ireland a king by name Finnloga, who had a brother, the pious Bishop Brendan. Adfin, one of the kings of Scotland, had a daughter named Gelgès, who had embraced the religion of Christ. King Finnloga's son was smitten with her beauty, and married her, but privately, because it was necessary to conceal it from King Adfin, who was an implacable enemy of the faith. He soon discovered it, however, and had his daughter seized and condemned to be burnt. In vain his relations and other persons of influence represented to him that man ought not to separate what God had joined; he ordered the stake to be prepared. But no sooner had Gelgès placed her foot upon the burning wood than it was extinguished. Her father was not convinced by this prodigy, but he consented to spare the life of his daughter, and he condemned her to perpetual exile. She retired with her husband to good Bishop Brendan, her uncle, and there gave birth to three sons—Fursy, Foïllan, and Ultan. On the death of their grandfather, Finnloga, their father was raised to the throne; but instead of returning to the court, they resolved, by Brendan's instructions, to devote themselves to the service of God, and they embarked as missionaries for Gaul." So far the chronicler.

Fursy, after many labours and hardships, attained the crown of martyrdom. Foïllan, the second brother, was preparing on the 31st October, 655, the day on which our narrative commences, to leave Nivelles, where he had been resting for a short space. Gertrude was at this time the abbess of the convent of Nivelles, and [illegible]given to Foïllan, in 633, the domain of Fosses, where

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he had built a church and monastery, the tower of which, in fact, exists to this day. His brother Ultan was now at the monastery of Fosses, and Foïllan was about to join him; but before doing so he wished to celebrate the festival of All Saints with his friend the blessed Vincent Maldegher. He took his journey therefore through an opening in the forest by the route of Soignies, where he was to receive hospitality for the night in the monastery of Vincent.

After traversing many intricate paths in solitude and silence, without meeting any living being; and having moreover, as he thought, lost his way, he began to look about for some human habitation where he might obtain shelter and direction. At last he perceived some rude straw-built huts, and thither he accordingly directed his steps. This was the hamlet of Soneffe.

Foïllan seeing that it was now late, and that he had not completed half his journey, was glad to enter a hut and ask for a guide. The frightful appearance and fierce looks of the inmates of the cabin would have frightened any one but the holy missionary. But, like the glass which we read of in the Arabian tale, that did not reflect any deformed object, the heart of the saint suspected no evil, and he at once desired two of the men to accompany him as guides.

Foïllan conversed with the men from time to time as they proceeded along the rough and unequal path; but they said little in reply. Finding they were still pagans, he spoke to them of God, His goodness and mercy, of the redemption of man by the blood of the Crucified, and of the paradise prepared for those who believe and do His will. All his words, however, fell unheeded on their ears, and he could only be silent and pray for them. At last the saint arrived with his guides at a part of the forest where an idol was worshipped; and there, whether it was that these pagans wished to force him to sacrifice like them to their god, or whether they thought only of robbing him, the four men threw themselves upon him and dispatched him

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with their clubs, heedless alike of his entreaties, or of the prayers which with his last voice he offered up for his murderers.

Night now set in cold and dismal. A violent wind began to howl among the trees; and next morning a thick snow, which lay for several months, covered the face of the country.

Meantime, the companions of Foïllan became alarmed at his prolonged absence, and at not having seen him at the feast of Christmas, which he was accustomed to celebrate at Fosses. The most dreadful fears began to be entertained, which were confirmed by several visions. His brother Ultan, as he was at prayers, saw pass before his eyes a dove white as snow, but with wings reddened with blood; a similar prodigy was seen by the abbess Gertrude; and on the 15th January, 656, information was given her in her cell at Nivelles, that in a certain spot of the forest of Soignies the snow was red. Next day she repaired thither, guided by a bloody vapour which hovered in the sky, and discovered the dead body of Foïllan. It was at first carried with pomp to Nivelles, but Ultan desired it might be buried at Fosses, as the martyr himself had requested. In order to arrive at this monastery it was necessary to cross the Sambre, then swollen by the melted snow and ice. Not knowing where to cross, it is related that Gertrude ordering them to leave the horses free, the latter passed, followed by the crowd, through the place which has ever since been called the "Ford of St. Gertrude."

The body of the martyr was afterwards enclosed in a beautiful chapel; and on the same spot, at a later period, was raised a magnificent church, to which was added, in 1123, an abbey of Premonstratensians. The colour of the snow, which had revealed the place of the crime, gave to this place the name of Rood (red), which was afterwards known by the name of Le Rœux, an important barony in the middle ages, and at this day a thriving little village. Soneffe, whence the murderers of the

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holy Foïllan came, continued, and still continues, to bear the marks of the divine malediction; for while all the other hamlets around became flourishing towns, this alone has remained as in the times of paganism, a collection of miserable huts.

XXVIII.

THE LEGEND OF ST. CÆDMON.

It is a common thing amongst us to speak of the gifts of genius; and the phrase is never more frequently used than in allusion to those poetic powers which, when found in any very high degree, convey to the rudest understanding the notion of coming from a higher source, and of being far out of the reach of those on whom they are not originally bestowed: yet few who use the term, and still more of those on whom those gifts have rested, ever think of the Giver. By another phrase as common as the first, they are wont to term the different manifestations of genius the gifts of nature; and in the annals of the saints there are not wanting an abundance of examples which seem as if given with the direct intention of teaching our forgetfulness and presumption that these gifts of nature are only the gifts of God. The very remarkable instance of Albert the Great is already before the reader; another, equally striking, is to be found in our own early history: it is that of the great Saxon saint and poet, Cædmon.

Attached to the great abbey of Whitby, which was founded in the seventh century by the Abbess St. Hilda, there was a certain poor rustic employed by the steward of the monastery in the work of the farm, and whose ordinary occupation was the care of the horses and cattle. He was neither young nor of natural abilities, and had passed all his life in the drudgery of his servile calling, which, however, was seasoned and made sweet

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to his soul by a holy and simple life, and the habit of prayer.

He was accustomed at times to join in the merry-makings and entertainments of his neighbours, at which meetings, according to the favourite Saxon custom, music and singing, of the rude and unpolished style of the day, were often introduced. But poor as were these performances, they were far above the capacity of Cædmon, who was wont to sit a rapt and marvelling listener to what doubtless seemed to him a display of incomprehensible talent.

One evening, as he sat with his comrades round a blazing winter hearth, one of the company proposed that all present should sing in turn to the music of a small lute, which being handed from one to another, should indicate the person who was next called on to amuse the assembled guests. The proposal was agreed to, and the singing began. We should probably think but little either of the music or words, were they produced in our own day; the rude war-songs of our Saxon forefathers were given in barbarous phrase, to a rough and unharmonious chant; there was little skill in the execution, and still less in the composition; yet Cædmon watched the approach of the lute to the corner where he sat with a sensation of nervous terror. It was not the first time when he knew he should be obliged to make the humiliating avowal that he could not sing; and good and holy as he was, it gave him pain. Cædmon was an English saint, and he had an English temperament,—a certain shyness and aptitude to blush, and the inability to carry off a failure well, and the painful consciousness of being awkward and stupid amid his gay companions. So, as the little lute came nearer and nearer, he grew more abashed, and shuffled about, and heartily wished himself safe in bed, or in the stable with his horses. Two more turns, good Cædmon, and the lute will be in your hands, and you will have, as usual, to pass it on and say, "I cannot sing;" and to-night, moreover, there are strangers present: for there

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has been a meeting of bishops and clergy who have come to hold council at the monastery, and a crowd of attendants in their train; and mingling with the master's guests you may see the equerry of his lordship of York, a huge Northumbrian, with a voice that would fill the abbey nave; and, worse still, there is the house-steward of Archbishop Theodore, whose keen Italian eye has more than once rested on you as you sat a little awkwardly in your corner, with a glance that said, as plain as glance could say, that he considered you as little better than a barbarian. What was to be done? To bear the ridicule of the whole company, and of that foreign fellow with his look of conceited superiority, was not to be endured; before the instrument left the hands of the next but one to himself, Cædmon had determined on flight, and rising from his chair as softly as he could, he stole to the door, and before his absence was noticed, found himself in the quiet refuge of his stable. He sat down on the heap of straw that lay against the wall in somewhat disconsolate mood. Why was he so different from others, he thought, that he should not be able to do what seemed so easy and so natural to them? "I marvel," he muttered, "that I can go among them, I that am so dull and heavy, and can find not a word to say, while other tongues are so glib and busy with the sea-kings and the like trumpery. Though, truly, could these great fingers of mine find their way among the strings of yonder lute, and knew I but the fashion of speech which they call singing, it should not be on the heathen Vikyngs that I would waste my breath; no, nor on the praise of strong ale, which nevertheless was the chief burden of the Northumbrian's song." And then good Cædmon's heart smote him a little to think how vexed and shamefaced he had been because he could not do what, after all, was scarcely worth the doing; and how far better it was to sing God's praises in his heart, and remain the dull rustic hind that he was, than to abuse God's gifts by an unworthy use of them; and lastly came a doubt whether the sweetest song he

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could have offered his Lord that night would not have been to have sat quiet in his chimney-corner, and borne the jests and ridicule of his companions with a patient will. And with these thoughts in his head, and the echoes of the last chorus yet ringing in his ears, Cædmon leant his head on the straw-heap and fell asleep.

In his sleep he had a singular dream; it seemed to him that he was still lying on his bed of straw, close by the horses' stall, when the door of the stable opened, and a stranger entered and stood before him. "Cædmon," he said, bending over his sleeping form, "I pray you rise, and sing me a song to-night." And the voice in which he spoke had a sweetness in it more exquisite than the finest music of the abbey choir. "I cannot sing," replied Cædmon, sorrowfully; "it was even for that reason I left the house and came here; for they were merry and cheerful, and I was dull, and so I came hither to hide myself, because I could not sing." "Nevertheless, thou shalt sing," said the other. "And what am I to sing about?" asked Cædmon; "I am fit to speak of nothing save the beasts and oxen that I tend, and the fields I till." "The beasts and the fields are God's creatures, and show forth His praise," replied his companion; "fear not, therefore, but sing as you find words, and it shall be of the beginning of created things."

Then Cædmon felt a marvellous change in his soul: thoughts and shapes came flocking on his mind, and they were not so much new things as old things with a new light shining on them and making them glorious. The images traced on his memory through the long years he had spent in the broad forests and healthy uplands of his native land, seemed to start up fresh and beautiful within him. He heard the larks carolling sweetly in the morning air, as they were wont to do when he went early into the plough-field; and the mystic glory of many a sunset swam in golden floods before his eye, which he had been used to watch as he plodded home from his daily labour, scarcely know-

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ing how much of their beauty was sinking into his soul. Nor was this all; for, mingling with the images of nature and the excellence of created things, there came thoughts of the Lord who had made them, notions about God, and aspirations after Him, which had filled his simple heart as he had toiled at work, and which in old time had seemed plain and homely like himself, but now were all bathed in a new beauty, as though the sunshine had suddenly been let into his heart. And soon he thought there followed words, not slowly and heavily, as Cædmon had been wont to speak, but flowing forth with a fulness and impetuosity like the waves of a broad and noble river; he felt that something mightier than himself was struggling within him for utterance; and when at last those prisoned words found vent, and shaped themselves into song, the sound of his own voice startled him, for it was rich and musical, even like the voice of him who had first addressed him and commanded him to sing.

Now if this were all, and the story of Cædmon were nothing but the story of a dream, there would be little to make it worth our notice beyond other dreams. Most men can remember times when the mystery of sleep has bestowed on them a fancied power, which fled from them when the grey daylight brought them back to commonplace and common sense; but with Cædmon it was not so. He went on making verses and singing them in his sleep; and when he woke he still found himself making verses, and could remember all he had made and sung during the whole of that night. Moreover, though when the cock began to crow outside, he started up from his straw, and yawned and rubbed his eyes, and found he was still the herdsman Cædmon, and knew that his first business was to lead the horses out to drink, and sweep their stalls, yet for all that, he knew he was at the same time another man. That wonderful gift was within him which makes all things new; that gift, whose joys, too rare and excellent for earth, are ever mingled with a pain, yet whose pains

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are worth all the common joys of rude souls; that gift so like the prophet's inspiration, which kindles us with a fire that surely first came down from heaven, and was meant to keep alive the altar-fire, though they on whom it falls too often forget from whence it came, and profane it to unhallowed purposes, so that it loses the pure light of its celestial glory, and burns with the dulled and faded lustre of an earthly flame.

Not so, however, did Cædmon treat the power which had been given him from God: reflecting within himself that the change which could have transformed a rustic herdsman into a poet, in the short space of a winter's night, was nothing short of miraculous, his next conviction was, that he was bound to impart the news of this strange transformation to his master the steward; and having come to this conclusion, he presented himself before him, and informed him, with his usual simplicity, that he had come to sing. "To sing!" exclaimed the steward; "now thou art surely beside thyself, or the strong ale thou drankest overnight hath got the mastery of thy brain. Never hast thou sung since I have known thee; and I would fain know, if thou be such a scholar in thy music, why thou ever sittest silent in thy corner like one of thine own beasts, when it is time for merrymaking; and now, when thou shouldest be abroad with the cattle, dost come to me to prate of singing: thou wast not given to such vagaries."

"So please you," replied Cædmon, "it is neither the ale nor mine own folly that speaketh; but a strange vision was given me last night as I lay in the stable; and none other than an angel of God, as I deem him, hath taught me how to sing: wherefore I pray you to listen to the verses that I have made, for truly I would have other man's judgment than my own what these things may mean."

When the steward saw by his words and the unusual earnestness with which he spoke, that some marvel had befallen him, he gave him leave to sing; and

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Cædmon began his poem on "The Beginning of Created Things." Scarcely did the steward know what to think; for the words were so lofty, and the strain so musical, and the mysteries on which he discoursed were so profound and excellent, that it seemed to him as if he had never heard poetry or music until then.

"Good Cædmon," he said, when the song was finished, "thy case is past my counsel to decide; and whether thy music come from heaven or hell, it must be for the Lady Hilda to resolve: for to her shalt thou surely go, and sing even as thou hast sung to me; and see well that thou tell her truly all things that have befallen thee, and all the words which were spoken to thee in the stable;" and so saying, he carried the inspired ploughman to the abbey-gate, and sent a message to the Abbess, that he craved to speak with her on a matter that would admit of no delay. They were admitted into her presence, and not a little did the purport of their coming perplex her.

"Thou desirest me to hear this man sing," she said, addressing the steward in a tone of some severity; "it is a strange, and methinks scarcely a fitting request. Of what does he sing, that thou shouldest call me from choir and prayer to listen to his idle carols?"

"Reverend mistress," said the steward, "I pray you to have patience with me; for even as I stand here, there is a mystery in this matter which ghostly hands alone can unravel. A spirit hath surely spoken to the man, but whether good or bad it is for your reverence to declare; only this much I know, that words like those that Cædmon spoke this morning have I never heard before."

Then Hilda commanded that he should begin his song again; and when she had heard "The Beginning of Created Things," she marvelled as greatly as the steward had done. The words of the heaven-taught poet found a quicker and readier response in her soul than they had done in that of his less spiritually-minded master. He began by an address to God, and de-

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voted himself to the praise of the Maker of all things, and of the power of the Creator and His counsel, and the deeds of the Father of glory. The Eternal God was, he said, the author of all miracles; and when He made the world, He stretched out the heavens to be the roof of that house which His Majesty had erected for the sons of men; and the earth was to be the place of their abode. All things were of Him, and all things should end in Him; therefore in creatures men should worship God, and praise the Creator who had made them. This was the burden of his poem.

When Hilda had listened for some time in profound silence and attention, she rose and addressed the poet:

"Cædmon," she said, "if thy tale be true, and these words thine own, the matter is too high for my poor wit to judge of; but the Lord Theodore of Canterbury and the Abbot Adrian are even now in the house, and thou shalt speak to them: it may be their learning may see farther in this matter than doth my simplicity."

Perhaps no young poet in the first flush of newly developed powers has ever been put to a harder ordeal than was poor Cædmon on that eventful morning; thrice within an hour's space to repeat his verse, and each time before a noble presence. It was no small trial for him to stand before the Abbess Hilda, whom he had been used to consider as the greatest person in the whole world; but to be brought before the Archbishop of Canterbury, the most learned man of Christendom, as men were wont to call St. Theodore, and the not less learned or less holy Abbot Adrian, who, between them, as we are told, made men talk Greek and Latin as though they were their native tongues.* However, there was no help for it; once more he had to tell his dream and repeat his verses, that all might determine what the dream was, and whence the verse proceeded. And when they had heard him speak (says V. Bede), they all

* Bede, b. iv. c. 2.

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concluded that heavenly grace had been conferred on him by our Lord.

"Yet since we know not surely whether these verses are his own," said the abbot, "were it not well, my lord archbishop, that some farther trial should be put upon him?"

"You say rightly," answered Theodore; "therefore will we choose out a passage of Holy Writ; and if he can put the same into like verses with those he has even now recited, we may no longer doubt that the hand of God is on him for some high purpose; if not, let him look well to it that he be not treated as knaves deserve."

The passage was selected, and Cædmon went away. When he returned the next morning, he gave them the whole composed in most excellent verse; and moreover the grace of God was so evident in the luminousness and holiness of his thoughts, far more than even in the marvels of his versification, that his hearers began to feel that they had not only found a poet, but a saint in the poor herdsman Cædmon.

"Whereupon," says V. Bede, "the abbess embracing the grace of God in the man, instructed him to quit the secular habit and take upon him the monastic life; which being accordingly done, she associated him to the rest of the brethren* in her monastery, and ordered that he should be taught the whole series of sacred history. Thus Cædmon, keeping in mind all he heard, and as it were chewing the cud, converted the same into most harmonious verse, and sweetly repeating the same made his masters in their turn his hearers. He sang the creation of the world, the origin of man, and all the history of Genesis, with many other histories from Holy Writ; and of the incarnation, passion, and resurrection of our Lord, and His ascension into heaven besides

* In the monastery of Whitby, or Streaveshalch, as it was then called, there were two separate and distinct communities, one of men and the other of women, both governed by the same head.

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many other things about the divine benefits and judgments, by which he endeavoured to turn men away from the love of vice, and to excite them to good actions." "And by his verses," adds the same historian, "the minds of many were often excited to despise the world, and to aspire to heaven. Others after him in the English nation attempted to compose religious poems, but none did ever compare with him, for he did not learn the art of poetry from men, but from God; for which reason he never could compose any vain or trivial poem, but only those which relate to religion suited his religious tongue."

We have given the story of Cædmon as furnishing a fitting illustration of the true vocation of a poet, who receiving his powers directly from the hand of God, is bound by his calling to dedicate them to those objects which are here so beautifully pointed out, namely, the praise of God, and the exciting of men's hearts to aspire to heaven. The first to write in his native tongue, Cædmon may be considered as the father of English poetry. He lived many years in the monastery, where his life was as sweet and holy as were his words; "for he was a very religious man," continues the same author, "humbly submissive to regular discipline, for which reason he also ended his life happily." We will give the account of his death in the words of his biographer. After telling us that he was taken with a moderate infirmity, and desired to be carried to the house prepared for the sick, he continues: "The person to whom he made this request wondered why he should desire it, because there were no signs of his dying soon; nevertheless, he did as he had ordered. He accordingly went there, and conversing pleasantly and in a joyful manner with the rest that were in the house, when it was past midnight, he asked them whether they had the Holy Eucharist there? They answered, 'What need of the Eucharist? for you are not likely to die, since you talk as merrily with us as though you were in perfect health.' 'Nevertheless,' he said, 'bring me

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the Eucharist.' And having received the same into his hands, he asked whether they were all in charity with him, and without any enmity or rancour? They answered that they were all in perfect charity and free from anger, and in their turn asked him whether he was in the same mind towards them? He answered, 'I am in charity, my children, with all the servants of God.' Then strengthening himself with the heavenly viaticum, he prepared the entrance into another life, and asked how near the time was when the brothers were to be awakened to sing the nocturnal praises of the Lord? They replied, 'It is not far off.' Then he said, 'Well, let us wait that hour;' and signing himself with the sign of the cross, he laid his head on the pillow, and falling into a slumber, ended his life so in silence. Thus it came to pass, that as he had served God with a simple and pure mind and undisturbed devotion, so he now departed to His presence, leaving the world by a quiet death; and that tongue which had composed so many holy words in praise of the Creator, uttered its last words whilst he was in the act of signing himself with the cross, and recommending himself into His hands."

Miracles followed on his death; and in the days of the Conqueror his body was granted an honourable translation. He is commemorated in the English martyrology on the twelfth day of February.*

* The resemblance between portions of Cædmon's poem on the Fall of Man and passages on the same subject in the *Paradise Lost* have been judged by several writers so remarkable as to justify the opinion that Milton was familiar with the English version of the Anglo-Saxon poem. Conybeare, comparing the passage referred to, says, "the resemblance of language is so striking, that much of this portion of Cædmon's ode may be literally translated by a hundred lines of our great poet."

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XXIX.

THE SCHOLAR OF THE ROSARY.

In a certain district in the south of France, about the time when B. Alan de la Roche was reviving the almost forgotten devotion of the Rosary in the fifteenth century, there lived a noble lady, who governed her household and family in all holy discipline, and who was among the first to join the confraternity in honour of the Mother of God, on its re-establishment in that country. She had an only child, named Bernard; a boy whose disposition was as noble as his birth, although indeed he was rather distinguished for the angelic innocence of his life than for the endowment of his mind. He was sent by his mother to study at a school in the neighbourhood, from whence he was wont to return home every evening, for she could not resolve to trust him away from her own care whilst he was still so young a child. It does not seem that Bernard was in any way deficient in ability; and he even made considerable progress in some of his studies, especially in grammar; but he was wanting in quickness and vivacity of imagination; and the composition of French and Latin verses, which was one of the common school tasks of his class, became an insurmountable difficulty. Many a weary hour did the poor boy spend, striving, by hard labour and toilsome perseverance, to accomplish what many a thoughtless, quick-witted scapegrace had finished in a few minutes; his constant failures and his wretched verses made him the butt of his companions, and were always bringing him into disgrace; and still the more he tried, the harder and more hopeless it seemed to get either ideas or verses out of his dull and tired brain.

One evening, when he returned home, after a day of unusual trouble, he sat down in disconsolate mood on the steps leading into the garden, and leaning his

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head on his hand, he gave himself up to very sorrowful reflections. He knew how much his mother cared that he should grow up a learned man, and then he was at the bottom of his class, with the reputation of being the dunce of the school; and all because he was not born a poet: it was certainly a little hard. Poets, as all know, are born, not made; and it seemed an unreasonable thing to spend so many a long day in trying to become what nature had not made him. Verses, he thought, were such unnecessary things: he could be a doctor, a soldier, or even a preacher, and still keep to simple prose; he could save his soul and the souls of other people, and never have mastered the scanning of an hexameter: "What can be the use of it all?" he muttered; "if they would but have kept to grammar!" Now, when he had come to this point in his melancholy meditation, he was joined by his mother, whose quick eye had caught a glimpse of her darling, and recognised in his attitude, and the heavy sorrowful way that his head lay on his clasped hands, that something unusual was the matter.

"Bernard," she said,—and at the sound of that gentle voice the poor boy started to his feet—"what is the matter? Your hair is hanging about your eyes, your cap is on the ground, and I see something very like tears on those white cheeks: moreover, this is not the first time that you have come home in the same way; but for many weeks past I have watched you with an aching heart, and with a sore misgiving lest the trouble should be in your own conscience." Bernard hung his head, but did not say a word. "Do you not speak, my child?" continued his mother: "you were never wont to hide your sorrows thus; or is it, indeed, that you have fallen into some grievous fault at school, and fear to declare it to me?"

"No, mother," replied Bernard, "they call me dunce, and fool, and they speak truly: but though now I could cry, as though my heart would break, it is for no fault that you would deem a grievous one; it is that I

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am not a poet." And with these words, Bernard hid his face on his mother's knee, and sobbed aloud.

"A poet, child!" said his mother; "is that your only trouble? Heard you ever that poets were happier or better than other men, that you should crave a gift that brings little ease, and ofttimes less of grace: covet the better gifts, Bernard, for this is hardly worth your tears; a holy heart and a spotless faith were fitter things to weep after."

"But, mother," replied Bernard, earnestly, "you know not how the case stands with boys: we have to learn so many things you would marvel to find the use for; and among them all there is none so strange to fit a meaning to as the making of these verses. And yet Master Roland says I am a dunce if I do not make them; and shall abide as I am, the laglast of the school, till I better know how to scan my lines, and have learnt the difference between a trochee and a spondee; and that," he added, with a heavy sigh, "I shall never learn."

"And so you are in disgrace with Master Roland because you write bad verses, is that the case?" said his mother; "perhaps it rather is, that you try not to write them better."

"Oh, mother," exclaimed Bernard, in a pitiful voice, "you know not what it is. For first there is the toil to find the words, and that is not so easy; for what sounds brave enough in plain-speaking prose, will never do for verse: then there are lines both short and long, and syllables and feet to be counted on your fingers, and seldom counted right; moreover, I know not how it is, but when I think I have them in their right number, Master Roland is sure to tell me they are all in the wrong place."

"Bernard," said his mother, "I do not think I can help to mend your verses, but I may chance to be able to mend your courage. It was but the other day that Master Alan de la Roche told me of a student whose books were as grievous to him as any verses of yours

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can be, and yet he found the way not only to read them, but to write them too; and died a great doctor and professor in the university."

"And what was his way?" asked Bernard. "Perhaps his books were written in prose; it might have been different if they had been poetry."

"His way was a very simple one," replied his mother; "he asked our dear Lady's help, and every day said the Rosary in her honour. I think there is little to hinder you from doing the same. Master Alan has given you a Rosary, though I see not that you often use it; take it before her altar every morning before you go to school, and say the prayers as he has taught you; and remember that no one ever prayed to Mary without obtaining relief."

Bernard was not slow in following his mother's counsel; and not content with saying part of the Rosary, he every day recited the entire fifteen mysteries on his knees before the image on Our Lady's altar. Nor was it long before a singular change was observed in the boy; not only did his former dulness and heaviness of capacity gradually disappear, but a certain depth of feeling and gracefulness of imagery was displayed in his school-verses, that placed them very far above the ordinary standard of such productions. How, indeed, should it have been otherwise? His soul was drinking at the very sources of spiritual beauty; and in the mysteries of joy and sorrow and glory which formed his daily occupation, he penetrated to the very depths of that divine life and passion, which supplied him with a profounder pathos than could be caught by the study of any human emotion. Moreover, the gracious names which were thus constantly on his lips sank into his heart, and brought their sweetness with them; the presence of Mary was with him like an unseen companion; and all day long he felt shining on his heart the earnest gaze of those "merciful eyes" he so constantly invoked: it refined his rudeness, and warmed the sluggish intellect with the flame of spiritual love; and whilst

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others would praise their favourite poets for their airy images and lively fancy, Bernard was happy in the thought that the inspiration of his pen was caught from no phantom of earthly imagination, but from the influence of an abiding Reality.

The masters marvelled at the change, and said many learned things about the development of the understanding; the scholars wondered also, and soon came to beseech Bernard to help them in their tasks; as for the boy himself, the light in his soul had stolen into it with such a soft and quiet gentleness, that he hardly knew the change; and when they praised and questioned him as to whence he drew his thoughts and imagery, he was wont to answer, with a wondering simplicity, that any one might do the same, for he found it all in the Rosary. This reply, which he constantly gave, soon became talked about among the rest, and gained him the title among his companions of the Scholar of the Rosary.

Every one now predicted great things of Bernard; he was the head of his class and of the school; the highest awards of learning, he was told, were now within his grasp; with that delicate and subtle fancy, and that solidity of understanding, he might aspire to any thing; the professor's chair or the doctor's cap would never surely be denied him. But their hopes and expectations were not to be realised; for the Scholar of Mary a higher and very different distinction was in store. One day he came home as usual, and complained of an aching pain in his eyes; before the morning the inflammation had increased to such a degree, that he could not bear the light, and was obliged to keep his bed in a darkened room, where, spite of every care and remedy which his mother's tenderness could bestow, he suffered the extremity of pain. For two months he lay in this state, whilst the disease gradually assumed a more dangerous character. The physicians desired that every ray of daylight should be excluded from his room, and the utmost care taken to preserve

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the slightest object from irritating the eye; an order which was strictly obeyed.

Nevertheless, in spite of his pain and increasing weakness, nothing prevented Bernard from fulfilling his customary prayers. Every day, as usual, he recited the fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary, and comforted his mother, when he grieved over the blindness that threatened him, by saying his devotion was one which needed neither book nor daylight to help it, but only the familiar touch of those dear beads that never left his neck. Alas, blindness was before long not the only evil she had to dread; it was soon evident that the malady had reached a fatal form, which no human skill could avail to remedy. Bernard was to die; all the great hopes excited by his newly-displayed talents vanished into thin air; and those whose tongues had been so busy with his precocious genius were now loud in deploring the loss of one from whom so brilliant a career might have been expected. As to his mother, she thought little of such things; and if she mourned her own loss, her grief had its consolation too; for she knew the innocence of his soul, and had the sure hope that she was but trusting him to the arms of a more loving Mother than herself. But there were the last deathbed duties to be performed; the priest was in the house; and before administering the Viaticum and the holy Unction, he was to receive the last confession of the dying child.

His mother entered the room to prepare him for the coming of the priest; and as she did so, she desired the attendant to bring a candle into the still-darkened chamber.

"What need of a candle?" said the boy; "tell them that it is not wanted."

"It is for the priest, my child," she replied. "You will try and bear the light for a few minutes; for the good father is come to hear your confession, and he could not see to enter without a light."

"But there is light," he replied; "the room is full

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of it, and has never been dark to me. I wonder that you do not see it."

"What light?" asked the priest, who was by this time bending over him. "Your mother and I are standing here, but to our eyes the room is darkened still."

"It is from Our Lady," replied the boy; "she is here by my bedside, and the rays are shining from her, and make it day. There has never been darkness here since I have been ill."

The priest felt an awe stealing over him, and involuntarily bowed his head towards the spot indicated by the child.

"And does that light hurt your eyes?" he asked; "you could not bear the daylight."

"It is joy," answered Bernard faintly,—"joy and glory; the sorrow is all gone now!" and the priest saw that in his last words he was still thinking of the Rosary. And so he died; and those whom he left needed not the evidence of miracles to assure them that the Scholar of Mary had been taken to the fulness of that glory, something of whose radiance had thus rested over his dying bed.*

XXX.

THE LEGEND OF ST. HUBERT.

In the reign of the Frankish king Theodoric the Third, there lived in Aquitain a certain nobleman who bore the name of Count Hubert. In his youth he had gone through various trials of fortune, for the enmity of the celebrated Ebroin, marshal of the king's palace, had compelled him to fly from his country and take refuge

* The substance of the above may be found in the work of Father Girolamo Taix on the Rosary.

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for a time in the service of Pepin of Herstal, mayor of Austrasia, somewhere about the year 681. He was, however, enabled to return to his own dominions on the death of Ebroin, which is connected with a legendary tale of peculiar horror. For it is said, that on a certain day some monks had wandered out from their convent, and were sitting by the banks of the river that flowed by the place, where they were indulging in somewhat vain and idle conversation. Their merriment was interrupted by the sound of oars, which seemed as if coming up the river; and looking to see the vessel from which the sound proceeded, they could perceive nothing. Still, however, the stroke of the mysterious oars sounded every minute nearer and nearer, they could hear the water washing round the prow of the invisible boat, which came on at great speed, and now it seemed opposite the very place where they sat. "Who are you," they cried, "who row in that boat?" for they were seized with an indescribable terror. The answer came over the water in tones that struck to their hearts like ice:

"We are demons, who are carrying away the soul of Ebroin, mayor of the palace to king Theodoric; for he is an apostate from the monastery of St. Gall."

"Holy Mary, help us!" cried the monks, as they listened trembling to the awful words; but the infernal voices spoke again:

"Well may you invoke Mary," they cried; "for we had thought to have taken you also, because you were speaking unfitting words at an unseasonable time." And with this warning the sound of the oars recommenced, and the vessel was once more heard softly parting the waters before her, until the echoes of the strokes died away in the distance.

This story probably never reached the ears of Hubert; for at the time of Ebroin's death, and his own return to his subjects and dominions, he himself was still a pagan. And yet, though he served the false gods, and knew nothing of the light of the Gospel, something

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of its influence seemed to have stolen unawares into his soul. He was loved as a mild and gracious lord by all under his rule, and the virtues which he practised, even in this time of heathen ignorance, drew on him the favourable eye of God, who called him to the faith by a special miracle,—similar to that already recorded of the martyr Placidus.* Hubert was passionately addicted to the chase; and one Friday he rode out with a great hunting-train to follow the deer in the forests of Aquitain. When they had ridden some time, there suddenly sprang out of the thicket the fairest hart that hunter's eye could rest on. She was milk-white, and of a gentle and delicate form, and she bounded along the forest-glade with such a winged and airy movement, that her hoofs scarcely seemed to shake the morning dew from the grass that grew upon her path. Then the horsemen all put spurs to their steeds, and the bugles sounded long and joyously, and Hubert, full of the excitement of the sport, put himself at the head of the train, and soon left them far behind as he followed in the track of the mysterious deer, unthought of by the huntsmen. He gained rapidly on his game, nay, he was even within arm's length of her, and was about to strike her with his lance, when to his surprise she stopped her rapid bounds, and turning as though to meet him, he saw between her horns the figure of a crucified man surrounded by a great light.

He checked his arm as it was about to give the fatal blow, and gazed with wonder on the sight before him. As he did so, a voice came from the lips of the figure, and spoke to him in sweet and plaintive tones. "Hubert," it said, "how long wilt thou chase the wild beasts of the forest? Is this a day, thinkest thou, to follow thine idle sport,—a day whereon I, who am the true God, died for thee and all men, even as thou dost see before thee?"

Hubert threw himself from his horse and knelt with

* See p. 139.

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tears of emotion before the figure of his Lord. The truths of Christianity were not entirely unknown to him, and he had no difficulty in understanding the language which he heard, and which he hesitated not to interpret as a divine call to the religion he had hitherto despised; moreover, the gift of faith was in his heart, and yielding to the power of its influence, he said in accents of deep humility, "O my Lord and my God, hitherto I have not known Thee; but now I will serve Thee in all things whereunto Thou callest me. Speak, therefore, I beseech Thee, and show me what thou wouldest have me to do, that I may be saved."

And the Lord answered him, and said these words: "Hubert, he that would follow Me must take up his cross, and come after Me. Go to Lambert, the Bishop of Utrecht, and he shall show thee what thou must do." With these words the vision ceased; when Hubert looked up again the white hart was gone, and he found himself kneeling alone in the forest-glade, with his horse quietly feeding beside him.

He mounted, and full of thought rode in quest of his companions; when they would have questioned him concerning his success with the deer, he was silent; and they deemed that perhaps a sportman's vanity deterred him from speaking of the failure of his sport; and so, sunk in deep abstraction, he rode homewards, whilst his retainers followed him, wondering at the unusual manner of their master.

Before that day's sun had set, Hubert set out alone for Utrecht; nor did he draw rein till he found himself before the palace of the holy bishop who then governed the Church in that city. Something of similarity existed between the early history of these two men. Lambert, like Hubert, had known the sorrows and trials of a long and unjust exile. For when he was still young he had been raised to the episcopal throne of Maestricht, from which the cabals and jealousy of King Childeric's courtiers had succeeded in driving him. After wandering about for some time as a home-

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less and houseless stranger, he at length entered a monastery of the country, and lived there for some years, happy in the resignation of a dignity for which his humility persuaded him he was unfit. This humility was evinced on many occasions, one of which is thus related in his legend. One night, it is said, as he rose to pray, he unintentionally made a slight noise on the pavement of the cloister. The abbot of the monastery was disturbed by the noise, and gave orders that whoever was moving at that unseasonable hour should out of penance go to the cross out of doors, and remain there for a certain space. Lambert meekly obeyed; nor did he venture to return till he should be sent for. It was a cold winter night; the snow lay deep around him, and fell on his person in heavy flakes; his feet and head were bare, and were pierced by the bitter frost, yet he remained patient and in prayer. Meanwhile the brethren rose to matins; and when the office was finished, according to custom they assembled before the fire, to warm themselves before again retiring to rest. The abbot looked around him, and missed one of the number. "Where is the Bishop Lambert," he said; for his dignity was always acknowledged by the brethren, to whom the history of his misfortunes and exile were well known.

"May it please you, my lord," said one of them, "he is praying by the cross outside; though, as I think, the snow is falling heavily, and the frost is sharp."

Then the abbot bade them quickly call him in; and when he was come, he fell at his feet, and besought his pardon for what he had done; but the saint smiled sweetly at him, and said without the smallest appearance of anger, "My father, one learns patience at the foot of the cross yonder." Such was the man to whom Hubert now applied for instruction in the faith. It need hardly be said that, together with the rudiments of Christian doctrine, he received from his hands the teaching and direction which tended to lead him on to the highest paths of perfection; so that he soon became di-

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vested of all love of the world, and all care for his riches and lands, and the empty toys of honour which had hitherto seemed good and desirable in his eyes, and sought only to adhere closely to Christ in the way of poverty and mortification.

He came back to his castle and lands in Aquitain only to bid them farewell for ever. Calling his people about him, he declared to them all things that had passed, and how that he had resolved to answer the strange call which had been sent to him, by an entire abandonment of the world. His bondmen were set at liberty, his retainers dismissed with generous presents, his goods and lands sold, and the price distributed to the poor; and when all this was done, and Hubert saw himself reduced from the state and condition of a powerful count to that of a poor and nameless beggar, he turned his back with a light heart on the county where but a short time before he had ruled and been honoured as its lord.

The next thing was to chose out a solitude for his future home, where he might apply himself with greater diligence to the life which he had resolved to follow. This was soon done; the broad valleys of France and Flanders were not wanting in spots whose loneliness presented him with all he required. In one of the most savage of these deserts he chose his abode; scooping out of the hard rock his little cell and chapel, where he spent some time in a life of prayer and penance, which offered a strange contrast to the gay and gallant days he had been wont to pass in his noble castle of Aquitain.

Now, he had no comrades save the wild beasts of the forest, whom he no longer pursued as game, but tamed and made his friends, so that they grew familiar with his form, and ranged fearlessly about his cell; the timid deer, too, were especially dear to him, in memory of that "milk-white doe" who had been made the ambassador of his salvation; they would come around him and feed out of his hand, and perhaps it was not the

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least singular part of the transformation which had taken place in Hubert's nature, that the bold and ardent sportsman was now turned into the protector of all the dumb creatures of his solitude.

His only food was the wild fruit of the forest, and the crystal stream that flowed over its rocky bed beside his hermitage; he slept on the stone floor, and was clad in a rough sheepskin; and yet, despite his hard and penitential life, Hubert felt that he had never known happiness before. And yet there were not wanting enemies to disturb his quiet, for the demons assaulted him day and night, and strove to trouble and tempt him with their darkest suggestions; but he met them stoutly, like a brave and valiant knight, and drove them from him with contempt: and thus sixteen years glided rapidly away.

Now one night, as he lay on his hard bed, he was awakened by a bright and shining light, which streamed through the rocky cavern, and seemed to turn its darkness into day. He looked up, and saw a beautiful and heavenly form bending over his couch; the lovely head was crowned with a diadem that seemed rather of glory than of gold, wings of dazzling lustre and many colours floated from the shoulders, and the soft friendly eyes looked down on him with a brother's love. Hubert knew that his guardian-angel was beside him. "Arise," said the sweet and musical voice of the celestial visitor; "arise, for thou hast tarried long enough in this solitude; and henceforth God hath other ways for thee to walk in: arise, and go to Rome, it is there His will shall be declared to thee."

Hubert scarcely knew what to think; for the deceits and frauds of the devil had taught him to mistrust even the fairest visions, lest perchance they should but conceal diabolic and dangerous delusions. He determined, therefore, to lay the whole matter before his spiritual master St. Lambert; and setting out towards Utrecht, he soon arrived in his presence, and narrated all that had occurred. The venerable bishop listened to his tale with

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attention, and when he had finished, he laid his hands on his disciple's head, and affectionately blessed him. "Go now," he said, "son of my adoption and of my old age, for this thing is from the hands of God; go, and fear nothing; for verily I know that great things lie before thee, and that the burden which weighs too heavily on weak and aged shoulders shall pass to them that are fitter to bear it." Hubert arose, wondering at the Bishop's words, whose meaning, however, he did not devise; and in obedience to the command he had received, he set out for the city of Rome, where St. Sergius I. then filled the pontifical chair.

Whilst Hubert was pursuing his long and painful journey, a terrible tragedy was taking place in the city he had left behind him. The bold and fearless simplicity with which the holy Bishop Lambert was wont to reprove sin wheresoever he met with it, could scarcely fail to raise him many enemies. Two of the most unprincipled men of Utrecht, who had suffered from the sharp reproof of the Bishop, excited a tumult against him, which ended in the loss of their own life. A relation of these two men, named Dodo, and an officer of Pepin's household, swore to revenge their death, and the opportunity of gratifying his revenge soon presented itself. Pepin subjected himself by the license of his life to the reprimands of his Bishop, who, in the exercise of his apostolic functions, never spared rank or dignity; but dealt his censures to all, without respect of persons.

Taking advantage, therefore, of the disgust which his boldness had caused in the prince's mind, Dodo persuaded him to give him the command of a body of men, at whose head he proceeded to the Bishop's palace, and bade him prepare for death. St. Lambert's death was worthy of his life; whilst the ruffians were battering at the palace-doors, he called his attendants about him, and bade them confess their sins and prepare for death; and having given them his blessing, he himself knelt down, and awaited the blows of his murderers in prayer.

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His body was buried in his own cathedral, amid the tears and lamentations of his people.

Meanwhile, we must carry our reader to the city of Rome, where the first streak of early dawn was just breaking its golden bars on the night's horizon, when Pope Sergius was aroused from his sleep by a hand that lightly touched his shoulder; he awoke, and started as he beheld an angel standing by his bed. "Sleepest thou, O Sergius?" said the messenger of God; "mark well the words I say, and forget them not. This night there hath been a bloody deed done in Utrecht, and the Church of God hath lost a faithful and true pastor; for the holy Bishop Lambert is gone to God. The sword of the ruffian Dodo is even now reeking with his blood, and the widowed Church of Utrecht is bewailing him in her tears. And even as I speak, his son and beloved disciple Hubert is entering Rome, not knowing wherefore he hath been led hither, save that the hand of God is guiding him. He it is, O Sergius, whom thou must name to the vacant see, nor shall a sign be wanting to show thee that this is the sure will of God; for this is the staff which thou shalt place into his hands, and thou shalt learn that he is most fit and worthy to bear it."

With these words the angel placed in the hands of the astonished Pontiff a richly-ornamented pastoral staff, and disappeared. He would have taken the whole to have been only a strange and distressing dream, if the staff which he still held, and which he recognised as the episcopal crosier of the holy Bishop of Utrecht, had not given evidence of the reality of his vision; wherefore he arose in haste, and gave orders that search should immediately be made throughout the whole of Rome until the Frankish pilgrim, who had that morning entered it, should be found and brought before him.

Many hours had not elapsed before the messengers of the Pontiff, having succeeded in their errand, ushered the pilgrim into the papal presence. Sergius regarded him with an earnest and inquiring eye: the sixteen years of solitude had wrought many changes in the

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gallant and knightly form of Count Hubert, and yet neither their lapse, nor the rough sheepskin garment which he still wore, were able entirely to conceal the nobility of his bearing. But it was not the indications of gentle and courtly training that arrested the eye of the holy Pontiff; it was the meek and saintly air that breathed in his open brow and gentle eye, and the lines which told how those pale cheeks had been worn by long years of prayer and penance, which still, neither the one nor the other, had diminished aught of the gladness and joyousness of a heart which had found its perfect rest in God.

"What is thy name?" asked the Pontiff at length, after Hubert had knelt for some time in silence at his feet.

"They call me Hubert," he replied humbly; for he had no thought of further declaring his dignity, or the history of his life. "I come from Aquitain, and have travelled hither by the order of Lambert of Utrecht, of whom I am the unworthy priest and follower."

"Thou hast had a worthy master," said Sergius gently,—for he feared to declare the fate of the murdered bishop with too much suddenness; "when did you hear of the holy man, and what tidings did you gather?"

"May it please your holiness," replied Hubert, "I have travelled these many weeks over mountains and desert roads on foot, and have scarce spoken to any man, nor have I heard aught of my good father and master since the day I parted from him at Utrecht."

Sergius paused for a moment in thought; then taking the pilgrim by the hand, he said, "Thou shalt come with me to a place where I will tell thee tidings of him, which were better for thee to hear there than here;" and, so saying, he led his astonished visitor to the great Basilica of St. Peter, and standing by the tomb of the apostle, he declared to him in gentle and affectionate terms how the holy Lambert had met with a martyr's death. Hubert wept bitterly, for the love he bore his saintly bishop was a true and filial one. "Thou must take courage," said the voice of the good

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Pontiff, as he bent over him with the tenderness of another father; "for my tidings are not ended yet: thou art he whom God designs to fill the throne which the sword of Dodo has rendered empty; and it is for this that his angel has brought thee hither, and has led thee to me even at this hour, and has taught me also what I must do, and what thou, O Hubert, must not refuse to obey; for thou art now Bishop of Utrecht."

Hubert was silent, for his tears still flowed fast for his martyred bishop, and he knew not how to answer; at length he looked up with his weeping eyes to the countenance of Sergius, and replied, "All praise, and love, and honour, and glory be to God, for ever and ever, Amen."

They were the words with which he offered himself in obedience to the unquestioned will of God; and Sergius understood their import. Giving him his benediction as he knelt, he embraced him affectionately, and said, "We will both pray before the altar of the Apostles, and will ask the Mother of grace and mercy to guide us aright in this matter;" and both accordingly prostrated before the sacred shrine, and remained for some minutes in silent prayer. It may be said of the whole life of Hubert, that it was passed under the ministry of angels; something, perhaps, in his gentle and loving nature, made him very dear to those heavenly beings, and drew them closely and familiarly to his side; for now again we are told the prayer of the two saints then kneeling before the Apostles' tomb was not long in finding its answer, and that answer was brought as before by the hands of an angel. He stood before them holding a stole in his hand, and he laid it on the neck of Hubert, saying, "This comes to thee from the Mother of God;" then he placed a golden key in his right hand, and added, "and this from the Prince of God's Church and people, and with it shalt thou loose and bind the souls of thy flock." And when Hubert had received the stole and the key, he knew that the will of God was clear and manifest, and he dared not

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refuse the office to which he had thus been called and appointed.

The Requiem Mass for the soul of Lambert was filling the minster of Utrecht with its solemn and lamentable tones. The people crowded the long aisles of the church, and their tears and sighs mingled with the sad notes of the funeral chant. Some weeks had passed since his death, and at first they had scarce dared to give vent to their sorrow, through fear of vengeance of the tyrant Dodo; but when at length the clergy would no longer delay to perform the public rites of his funeral, all Utrecht assembled to honour the memory of one whom they hesitated not to declare had died a martyr's death. The news of their proceedings reached the ears of the incensed Dodo, and drew from him a torrent of angry words; but his anger was increased, and carried to a fearful height, when a messenger hastily entered his presence with the tidings that Hubert, the disciple and friend of the murdered bishop, had been appointed to succeed him, and was even then but an hour's journey from the city-gates.

"Never shall he enter those gates alive," exclaimed the ferocious tyrant; and calling together his retainers, he set out at their head, and rode at a furious pace to meet the new bishop, who was making his way, accompanied by two attendants, towards the city, where a few weeks before he had parted with his friend.

It was a strange contrast as they met: Hubert and his companions were on foot; the dust of their long and weary journey lay on them, and scarcely would you have judged from their poor and way-worn appearance that they pretended to any higher dignity than that of the humblest of the peasantry. Dodo and his followers were mounted and armed after the profuse fashion of a semi-barbarous court; their corslets glittered with gold, and their plumed helmets flashed like the sun in the eyes of the simple travellers, whom a sudden turn in the forest-road brought face to face with their enemies. Nor was it long before the deadly intention of the troop

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before them became evident; with many a blasphemy and word of impious outrage against God and the saints, Dodo called on his men to the slaughter of the three pilgrims; and Hubert, whose heart bounded for one short moment with delight, as the hope of a speedy martyrdom rose before him, folded his hands on his breast, and waited quietly to receive the shock of the impetuous chargers.

Another moment, and they had vanished from his eyes! He hardly dared believe the scene that stretched before them, and yet its terrible reality was too clear for him to doubt. There was a fearful chasm in the road, that at one moment before lay so peacefully in the morning sunshine; and as he drew near and gazed into its awful depths, he knew that the earth had opened her jaws to receive alive into her eternal prison the souls and bodies of the murderers of Lambert.

Hubert was received in Utrecht with inexpressible joy, and his after-life was worthy of its beginnings. His diocese included the vast tract of the forest of Ardennes, within whose wild and deep recesses there still lingered remains of the old idolatry which had fled before the face of Christianity, and taken refuge in the wilderness, where its dark and unholy rites were still practised in secret by many. St. Hubert penetrated in person through all the windings of the forest, casting down the idols, and preaching with such a winning grace, that the hearts even of the fierce and savage pagans were knit to him in love. Ardennes long kept his memory with a loyal fidelity; and in one of the churches erected on the scenes of his labours within her wilds was long preserved that sacred stole which had been sent to him by the hands of Mary. It was a joyous and beautiful sight, we are told, to see the holy bishop keeping the Rogation-days in that great forest; for all the people kept solemn fast, and followed the procession on foot through the fields and villages, and among the pleasant woods, and the cross was borne over the spots lately defiled by the sacrifices of the heathens, and the relics

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of the saints—and of St. Lambert among the number—were carried on the shoulders of the clergy, and the litanies swelled with a loud and solemn echo through the recesses of the lonely wilderness. St. Hubert retained something of his old associations, and to the last was a forest saint. He lived to govern the Church of Utrecht for many years, but he ceased not to sigh for the hour of his release. It came at length, and not without a warning from his angel-friend, a year before that it was at hand. Often during that year he visited the tomb of Lambert, and recommended himself to his prayers; and when the day was come which he knew would be his last, he preached a farewell sermon to his people, and then lay down to die. When the last moment drew near, he rose in his bed, and joining his hands with the simplicity of a child, he recited the Creed and the Our Father, and so expired on the 30th of May, in the year 727. His body, and the golden key of St. Peter, are deposited in the Collegiate Church of St. Peter in Liège.

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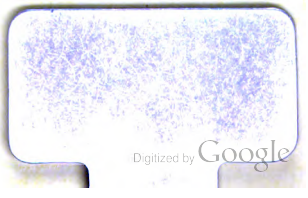
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